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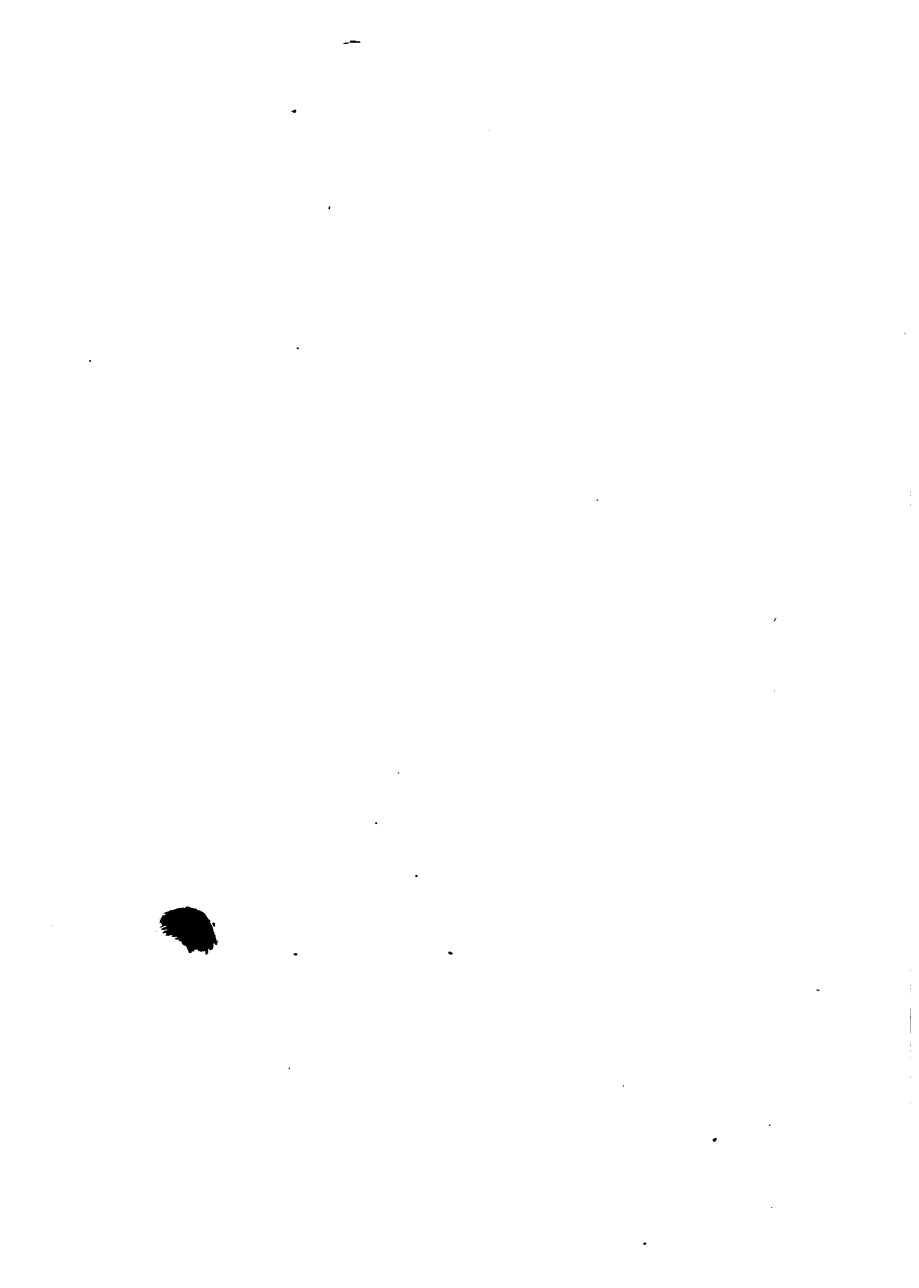


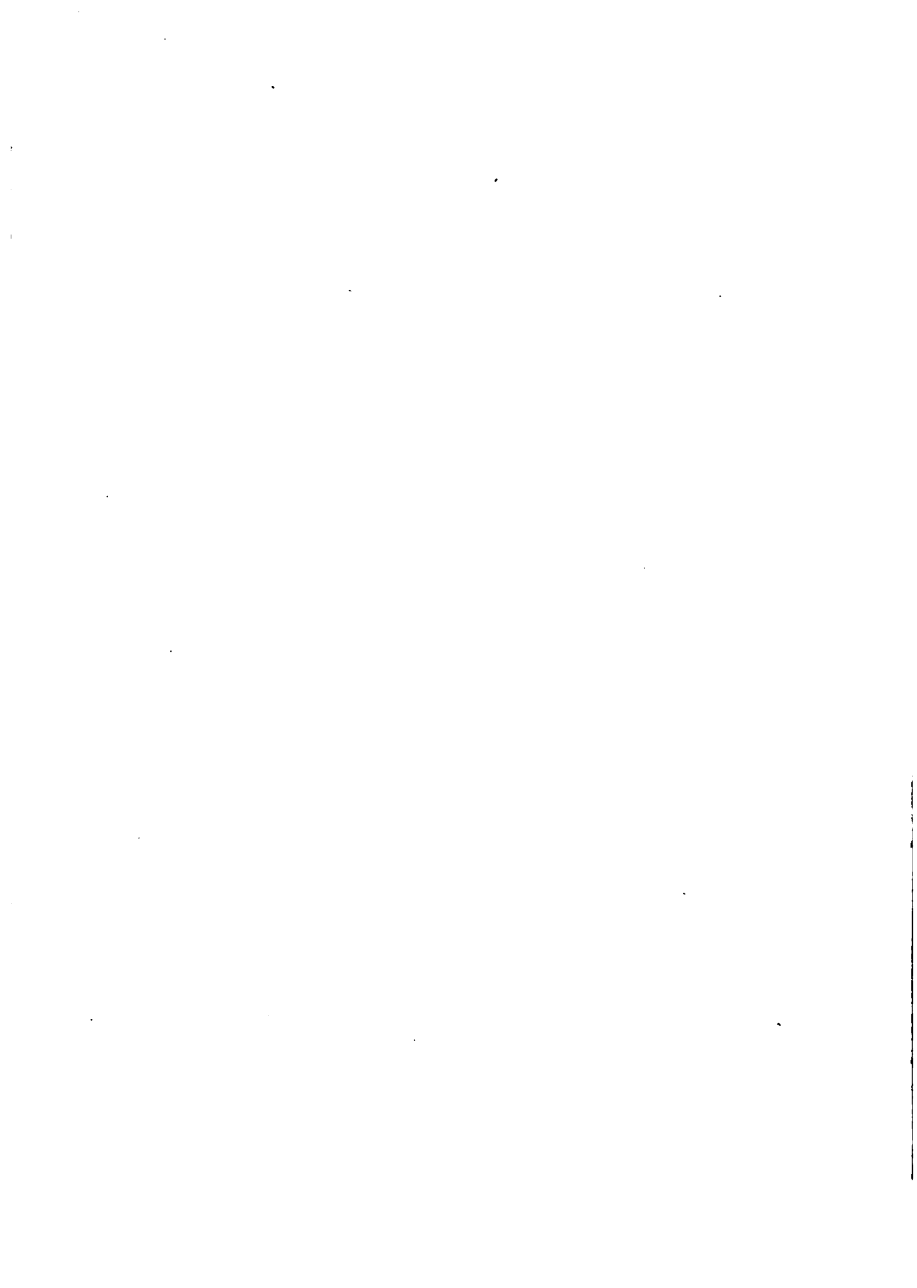
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Alfred Henry







MISSY. — PAGE 50.

NIGHT BED TIME STORIES.

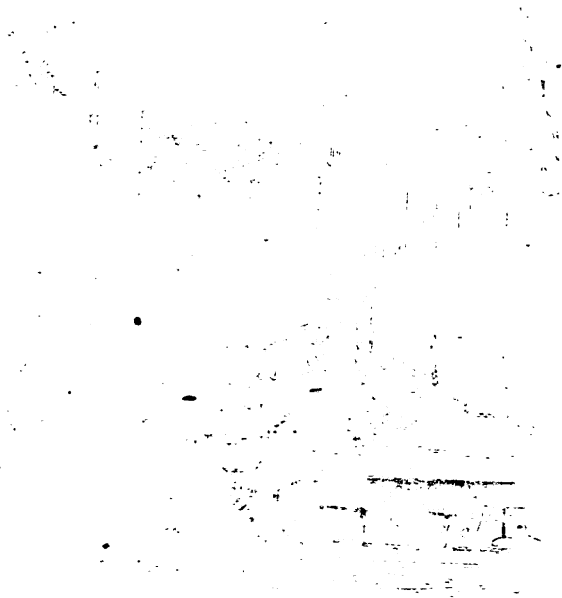
LOUIS CHAMBERLAIN, AUTHOR.

THE FIRST BOOK OF THE SERIES.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY EDWARD D. BROWN.



BOSTON:
RICHARD D. LADD, 1877.



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MORE BED-TIME STORIES.

BY

LOUISE CHANDLER MOULTON,
AUTHOR OF "BED-TIME STORIES," AND "SOME WOMEN'S HEARTS."

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY ADDIE LEDYARD.



BOSTON:
ROBERTS BROTHERS.
1875.

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TO MY DAUGHTER FLORENCE.

[AFTER A TWELVEMONTH.]

*"More Bed-Time Stories," Sweetest Heart,
And all to you belong:
All that I have and am, my dear,
I give you with my song.*

*All that I have and am, my dear,
Is not too much to pay
As tribute to the fair, young queen
Who rules my heart to-day;*

*As tribute to the dear, blue eyes,
And to the golden hair,
And sweet, new grace of maidenhood
That wraps you everywhere,—*

*The shy surprise of maidenhood,
That still turns back to hear
The tales I tell at shut of day:—
So these are yours, my dear.*

L. C. M.

October, 1874.

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MORE BED-TIME STORIES.

AGAINST WIND AND TIDE.

JACK RAMSDALE was a bad boy. He had been a bad boy so long that secretly he was rather tired of it; but he really did not know how to help himself. It was his reputation, and it is a curious thing how naturally we all live up to our reputations; that is to say, we do the things which are expected of us. There is a deal of homely sense in the old proverb, "Give a dog a bad name and hang him." Give a boy a bad name, and he is reasonably sure to deserve one. Not but that Jack Ramsdale had fairly earned his bad name. His mother had died before he was old enough to remember her, so he had never known what a home was. Once, when his father was unusually

good-natured, he had asked him some questions about his mother.

"She was one of God's saints, if ever there was one," the man answered, half reluctantly. "Everybody wondered that she took up with me, but maybe it was because she saw I needed her more than anybody else did. She might have made a different man of me if she'd lived; at least, I've always thought so. I never drank so much when she was alive but what I kept a comfortable home over her head. But when she was gone, it didn't appear to me there was any thing left to live for. I lacked comfort sorely, and I don't say but what I've sought for it in by-paths, —by and forbidden paths, as she used to say."

"I wish I could ha' seen her," said Jack.

"She was a dreadful motherly creetur, and was always hangin' over you. Cold nights I've known her get up half-a-dozen times, often, to see if the clothes was all up over your shoulders; and sometimes I've seen her stand there looking down at you in the biting cold till I thought she'd freeze; but I didn't dare to say any thing, for her lips were

movin', and I knew she was prayin' for you. She was a prayin' woman, your mother was. I used to think her prayers would save both of us."

"I can't make out how she looked," Jack persisted. He was so anxious to hear something about this dead mother who had loved him so. Ever since she died, he had been knocked round from pillar to post, as they say, with his father. Sam Ramsdale was good help, as all the farmers knew, when he was sober; but he was not reliable, and then he had the disadvantage of always being incumbered with the boy, whom he took with him everywhere, — an unkempt, undisciplined little fellow whom no one liked. Now, as his father talked, it seemed to him so strange a thing to think that some one used to stand beside his bed in cold winter nights and pray for him, that he could hardly believe it; and he said again, out of his desolate longing, —

"I wish I could ha' seen how she looked."

"I don't suppose folks would ha' said she was much to look at." His father spoke, in a musing sort of way. "She was a little pale slip of a

woman, with soft yellow hair droopin' about her white face, and eyes as blue as them blue flowers you picked up along the road. But there, I can't talk about her, and I ain't a goin' to, what's more; and don't you ever ask me again!"

From that time Jack never dared to ask any more questions about his mother, but all through his troublesome, turbulent boyhood he remembered the meagre outlines of the story which had been told him. No matter how bad he had been through the day, the nights were few when he failed to think how once a pale slip of a woman, with soft yellow hair around her white face, and eyes blue as the blue gentians, had bent above his slumbers and said prayers for him.

When he was ten years old his father died in the poor-house. Drink had enfeebled his constitution; a sudden cold did the rest. There were a few weeks of terrible suffering, and then the end came. Jack was with him to the last. There was nowhere else for him to be, and the father liked to have him in his sight. One day, just before the end, when they were all alone, the man called the boy to his bedside.

"I can't tell you to follow my example, Jack; that's the shame of it. I've got to hold myself up as a warnin', and not as an example. Just you steer as clear o' my ways as you can; but remember that your mother was a prayin' woman. I s'pose nobody'd believe it, Jack; but since I've been lyin' here I've kinder felt nearer to her than I ever did before since she died. Seems as if I could a'most hear her prayin' for me; and I think, by times, that the God she lived so close to won't say no. It's the 'leventh hour,' Jack, the 'leventh hour, I know that as well as anybody; but she used 'to sing a hymn about while the lamp holds out to burn. When I get there I shall get rid of this awful thirst for drink. It's been an *awful* thirst; no hunger that I know of can match it; but I shall get rid of that when this old body goes to pieces. And what does a Saviour mean, if it ain't that He'll save us from our sins if we ask Him?"

As he said these last words he seemed sinking into a sort of stupor, but he started out of it to say once more, —

"Never follow my example, Jack, boy. Remember your mother was a prayin' woman."

Those were the last connected words any one ever heard him speak. After that the night came on, — the double night of darkness and of death. Once or twice the woman who acted as nurse, bending over him, heard him mutter, "The 'leventh hour, Jack!" and afterwards she wondered whether it was a presentiment, for it was just at eleven o'clock that he died.

Jack had been sent to bed a little before, and when he got up in the morning, he knew that he was all alone in the world.

After the funeral Deacon Small took him home. He wouldn't be of much use for two or three years to come, the deacon said. Maybe he could drive up the cows, and ride the horse to plough, and scare the crows away from the corn, but he couldn't earn his salt for a number o' years to come. However, somebody must take him, and he guessed *he* would. It would be a good spell before the "creetur" would come of age, and the last part of the time he might be smart enough to pay off old scores.

But surely Jack Ramsdale must have eaten more salt than ever boy of ten ate before if he did not work enough for it, for it was Jack here, and Jack there, all day long. Jack did everybody's errands; Jack drew Mrs. Small's baby-grandchild in its little covered wagon; Jack scoured the knives; Jack brought the wood; Jack picked berries; Jack weeded flower-beds. From being an idle little chap, in everybody's way, as he had been in his father's time, he was pressed right into hard service, for more hours in the day than any man worked about the place. Now work is good for boys, but all work and no play — worse yet, all work and no love — is not good for any one. Jack grew bitter; and where he dared to be cruel, he was cruel; where he dared to be insolent, he was insolent. Not toward Deacon Small, however, were these qualities displayed. The deacon was a hard master, and the boy feared, and hated, and obeyed him. But as the years went on, five of them, he grew to be generally considered a bad boy. At fifteen he was strong of his age, a man, almost, in size.

His schooling had been confined to the short winter terms, and he had always been the terror of every successive schoolmaster.

When he was fifteen, a new teacher came, — a handsome, graceful young man, just out of college. He was slight rather than stout, well-dressed, well-mannered, fit, you would have said, for a lady's drawing-room, rather than the country school-house in winter, with its big boys, tough customers, many of them, and Jack Ramsdale the toughest customer of all. After Mr. Garrison had passed his examination, one of the committee, impressed by what he thought a certain fine-gentleman air in the young man, warned him of the rough times in store for him, and especially of the rough strength and insubordination of Jack Ramsdale. Ralph Garrison smiled a calm smile, but uttered no boasts.

He had been a week in the school before he had any especial trouble. Jack was taking his measure. The truth was, the boy had a certain amount of taste, and Garrison's gentlemanliness impressed him more than he would have cared to own. It is

possible that he might have gone on, quietly and obediently, but that now his bad name began to weigh him down. The boys who had looked up to him as a leader in evil grew impatient of his quiet submission to rules. "Got your match, Jack?" said one. "Goin' to own beat without giving it a try?" said another. And Jack began to think that the evil laurels he had won, as the bravo and bully of the school, would fall withered from his brow if he didn't make some effort to fasten them.

So one morning, midway between recess and the close of school, he took out an apple and began paring it with a jack-knife and eating it. For a moment Mr. Garrison looked at him; then he remarked, with ominous quietness, in a tone lower and more gentle than usual, —

"Jack, this is not the place or time for eating."

"My place and time to eat are when I am hungry," Jack answered, with cool insolence, cutting off a mouthful, and carrying it deliberately to his mouth.

"You will put up that apple instantly, if you please."

Still the teacher spoke very gently, and turned a little pale. The persuasive words and the slight paleness misled Jack. He thought his victory was to be so easily won, there would not even be any glory in it. He smiled and ate, quite at his ease.

"You will come here whether you please or not," was the next sentence from the teacher's desk. Jack cut off another mouthful and sat still.

Then, he never knew how it was, but suddenly, in the twinkling of an eye, he felt himself pulled from his seat out into the middle of the floor while knife and apple flew from his hand. He kicked, he struggled, he tried to strike; but an iron grasp held his wrists. The strong muscles of the stroke-oar at Harvard did good service. The handsome face was pale, but the lips were set like steel, and the cool eyes never wavered as they fixed and held those of the young bully. Then suddenly he whipped from his pocket a ball of strong fish-line and bound the struggling wrists tightly, and, pushing a chair toward his captive, said, coolly, —

"I want nothing more of you till after school. You can sit or stand, as you please. Now I will hear the first class in arithmetic."

There was a strange hush in the school, and every scholar knew who was master.

When all the rest had gone, the teacher turned to Jack Ramsdale.

"I took you a little by surprise," he said. "Perhaps you are not yet satisfied that I am stronger than you."

"Yes, I'm satisfied," Jack answered. "I ain't so mean but what I'm willing to own beat when it's done fair and square."

Mr. Garrison, meanwhile, was untying his wrists. As he unwound the last coil, he said, —

"The forces of law and order are what rule the world. I think if you fight against them, you'll always be likely to find yourself on the losing side."

A great bitter wave of defiance swelled up in Jack's heart; not against Mr. Garrison as an individual, but against such as he, — handsome, graceful, cultured; against his own hard lot; against a prosperous world; against, it almost seemed, God, Himself.

"What do *you* know about it?" he said sul-

lenly. "You never had to fight. It was all on your side. God did it. He made you handsome and strong, and had you go to school and college, and grow up a gentleman. And he made me" — how the face darkened here — "what you see. He took my mother, who did love me and pray for me, away from me when I wasn't more than three years old. He gave me to a father who drank hard and taught me nothing good. And then he took even him from me, and handed me over to Deacon Small; and I tell you, teacher, you don't know what a tough time is till you've summered and wintered with Deacon Small. I've got a bad name, and who wonders? and I feel like living up to it. I hadn't any thing against you, specially; but if I'd given in peaceably to all your rules, the boys would have said I had grown chicken-hearted, and a little name for pluck is all the name I have got."

Mr. Garrison looked at him a few moments, steadily. Then he said, —

"It does seem as if fate had been hard on you. But do you know what I think God has been doing

for you, in giving you all these hard knocks; for things don't *happen*; God never lets go the reins."

The boy looked the question he did not speak, and Mr. Garrison went on.

"I think He has been making you strong, just as rowing against wind and tide made my wrists strong, until now you could fight all your enemies if you would.

"The thing we are put here for," he continued, "is to do our best; and if we are doing that, in God's sight, there is nothing that can prevail against us; not fate, or foes, or poverty, or any other creature. There is nothing in all the universe that is strong enough to stand against a soul that is bound to go up and not down. You may go home, now."

It was one of Mr. Garrison's merits that he knew when to stop. Jack Ramsdale went home with that last sentence ringing in his ears, —

"There is nothing in all the universe that is strong enough to stand against a soul that is bound to go up and not down."

The words went with him all the rest of the day. They lay down with him at night, and he looked out of his window and fixed his eyes on a bright, far-off star, and thought of them.

What if he should turn all the strength that was in him to going up and not down? If he did right, who could make him afraid? If he served willingly, he need fear no master. It was very late, and the star, obedient to the law which rules the worlds, had marched far on, out of his sight, before he went to sleep. He had made a resolve. In the strength of that resolve he awoke to the new day.

"I will not go down," he said to himself; "I will go up and on!"

He was not all at once transformed from sinner to saint. Such sudden changes do not belong to this slow world. But the purpose and aim of his life was changed. Never again did he lose sight of the shining heights he meant to climb. If the mother in the heavenly home could look down on the world below, she knew that not in vain had she been "a praying woman." To Mr. Garrison the

boy's devotion was something wonderful,—humble, loyal, faithful, and never ceasing. From being the teacher's terror, Jack had become the teacher's friend.

BLUE SKY AND WHITE CLOUDS.

“**S**AY yes, and you’ll be such a dear papa.”

Papa bent down and kissed his girl, before he asked, half reproachfully, —

“And how if I say ‘no’? Shan’t I be dear, then?”

Kathie blushed, and then laughed.

“Why, of course you’ll be dear, any way; but may be it’s partly because you are so good, and hate so to say no to your own little daughter, that I love you so much.”

“To my little daughter as tall as her mother? Do you know, small person, that I’ve often thought it might be better for that same little daughter if I said no to her oftener? I couldn’t love you more, but I’m afraid I might love you more wisely. A hundred and twenty-five dollars for a new party dress! Bring your own mature

judgment to bear on it, and tell me if it appears quite sage, even to you."

Kathie thought so hard for a moment that she fairly scowled with earnestness; then she answered, —

"Yes, on the whole, I think it will be eminently judicious. You see, I shall be going out a good deal now, and I can do so many different things with a handsome silk, and if I got a tarleton, or any of those cheap, thin goods, it would be used up at once."

Papa smiled.

"Well, if you are quite sure you're right, I'll bring the check home this noon, and you and mamma can begin your search for this wonderful yellow gown."

"Yellow!" Kathie clapped her hands to her ears. "What did I ever do to make you think I would wear a horrid yellow gown?"

"Oh, was it red you said you wanted?"

"Worse and worse. You talk like a Hottentot. My gown is to be blue, soft, and lustrous, like a summer sky, and I am to look in it, — well, you shall see on Christmas Eve."

Then, with half a dozen good-by kisses, the father of this only child — happy, easy-going, and too indulgent — took himself off down town, and Kathie danced away to the sewing-room to find her mother and inform her of her success.

Kathie Mason, at sixteen, was a girl bright, and sweet, and bonny enough to tempt any parent to a little over-indulgence. She had soft, sunny, yellow hair; and lovely, dark brown eyes; with a look in them that kept saying, "Oh, be good to me!" a delicate, flower-like face; and a mouth red as Fair Rosamond's, which has long been dust now, but which poets and painters raved about centuries ago. She had a graceful little figure, and a clear, fresh young voice; and she had a heart, too, which was in the right place, though she herself was almost a stranger to it. She loved beauty dearly, whether in books, or nature, or human faces, or blue silk gowns, and it was just as natural to her to be a picture, whatever way she looked or moved, as it was to be Kathie.

As she danced along she was humming a verse of a gay little French *chanson*, where some lover

said his love was like a rose ; and you thought it might have been written about herself, only Kathie had no thorns. As she drew near the sewing-room she stopped, for her mother and the dress-maker were talking busily. Miss Atkinson was a pathetic little woman, with eyes which looked as if the color had been washed out of them by many tears, a thin, frail body, and a voice not complaining, but simply plaintive. Somehow Kathie hated to break in upon the slow pathos of those tones with her blue silk ecstasy, so she stood leaning against the door for a few moments and waited.

“ You see,” the little woman was saying, “ it was a great pull-back, my being sick two months in the summer, and then my brother being so much worse. But it will all come right, somehow. If I can manage to get Alice clothed up so she can go to school, I shall be thankful ; for she’s a bright child, and it’s too bad to have her wasting her time. But then, food and fire must come first, and if people are sick they are sick, and two hands can’t do any more than they can.”

There was nothing to oppose to this mild fatalism ; so Kathie's mother only said, very sympathizingly, that it was hard, and that it seemed as if, with her sister and her sister's child to support, Miss Atkinson had all she could do before, without undertaking any new responsibilities for the ailing brother and his family.

" Oh ! but there's no one else to do it if I don't, you see," quoth the little dress-maker, almost cheerfully — as cheerfully, that is, as her voice could be made to speak ; but Kathie noticed that a moment after she pressed her hand on her side and drew a sharp, hard breath.

" Does your side pain you, Miss Atkinson ? " she asked, kindly.

" Not much more than usual. It's rather bad, most days. I went to work too soon after I was sick, the doctor said. But he didn't tell me how the rest were going to live if I laid by any longer ; and, dear me, I'm thankful enough to be able to work at all."

Kathie thought she should be ashamed to have this poor little woman, who had two people be-

sides herself to provide for, entirely, and no knowing how many more, in part, work on her blue silk superfluity. Clearly *that* must be made by some other dress-maker; and she could not even speak to her mother about it now; so she just asked for some work, and sat down with it, thinking more seriously than, perhaps, she had ever thought in her gay, butterfly life before.

"How old is your little niece, Alice?" she asked, after a while.

"Ten, and she is as far along in her studies now as a good many girls of twelve. I did mean to have sent her straight through, normal school and all, and let her prepare to be a teacher; but it doesn't look much like it, now William's taken so poorly. I expect I shall have to pretty much clothe his three children besides Alice."

"Can't your sister, little Alice's mother, help you at all?"

"Well, yes, she does help. She does all she's able to, and more; for, you see, she's feeble, too. She keeps house for us, and cooks, and washes, and makes our things after I fit them, and keep-

us mended; but there's nothing she can do to bring in any thing. But there, I beg your pardon ten times over, apiece. It's against my principles to go out sewing, and harrow up folks' minds with my troubles; only, you see, I'm a little nervous and unsettled to-day on account of Alice's crying pretty hard this morning because she hadn't any thing to wear to school."

Papa Mason took Kathie aside when he came home to dinner, and with a little fun, and teasing, and pretence of mystery, produced the check. There it was, one hundred and twenty-five dollars, all right, and three weeks between now and Christmas Eve to get her blue silk gown made.

While she ate her roast beef she began to think again. One question kept asking itself over in her mind,—Why should some people have blue silk gowns, and others have no gowns at all? I rather think we have all asked ourselves this same thing, in one form of words or another. Since the great Father made and loves us all, why should one be Queen Victoria and another little Alice staying at home from school for want of a few

yards of woollen and a pair of boots? Political economists have ciphered it all out, beautifully; but Kathie did not know that, and so the vexing question puzzled her. What if it was done just to give us a chance to help each other? she asked herself, at last, and the text of a sermon she heard once came into her mind,—“Bear ye one another’s burdens.” If all fared just alike there would be no chance for helpfulness, or charity, or self-denial; so may be clothes would be put on people’s backs at the expense of better things in their hearts. It must be that God knew best. Oh! if one couldn’t think that, the world might as well fall to pieces at once.

“Will you have pudding, dear? I have asked you three times,” said Mrs. Mason’s voice, with a little extra energy in it; and Kathie looked up out of her dream with a certain vagueness in her eyes, and answered,—

“A hundred and twenty-five,” whereat they all laughed.

“I can’t give you a hundred and twenty-five puddings; but, if you’ll please make a beginning

with this one, no doubt the rest will come before the year is over."

Whereupon Kathie roused herself from her speculations, ate her pudding, and sent her plate for more, with a good, healthy, girlish appetite.

That afternoon she sewed quite diligently, and talked little; but her eyes were bright, and her face all the time eager with some thought.

After tea was over, and Miss Atkinson had gone, and papa had stepped out to see a business friend, Kathie sat down, as was one of her habits, on a low stool beside her mother, and laid her head in her lap. Mrs. Mason knew that all the afternoon's thinking would come out before the child got up again; so she just smoothed the fluffy, yellow hair with her hand and waited.

"Don't you think, mamma, that Miss Atkinson must be a good deal better Christian than the rest of us, she's such a patient burden-bearer? She never seemed to think for one moment that it was hard she should have to work so, or that she couldn't have what she wanted herself. All that troubled her was because she couldn't do what she had planned for Alice."

Then, when Mrs. Mason had made some slight answer, there was silence again for a time; and then Kathie cried impulsively, —

“Mamma, what a perfect good-for-nothing I am. I never carried a burden for any one in my life. I have just been a dead weight on some one else’s hands.”

“Not a *dead* weight, by any means,” and Mrs. Mason laughed, “and really, papa and I have found it rather a pleasure than otherwise to carry you.”

The loving girl kissed the hand that had been stroking her hair, but she was quite too much in earnest to laugh.

“Well, mamma, you know it doesn’t say, — ‘Bear ye one another’s burdens, all of you but Kathie, and she needn’t.’ I think this rule without any exceptions means me, just as much as it does any one; and I shan’t feel quite right in my own mind till I begin to follow it. I want to bear part of Alice.”

Kathie was talking very fast by this time, and her cheeks were very pink, and her brown eyes very bright.

“You see I’ve thought it all out, this afternoon. If Miss Atkinson will feed her and house her, I do think I might undertake to clothe her until she is through school and ready to teach; and don’t you think I’d feel better when I came to die to have done some little thing for somebody? You see it would come very easy. My dresses, and cloaks, and hats would all make over for her. There wouldn’t be much to buy outright, except boots, and stockings, and under clothes, generally.”

“And wouldn’t you find all that rather a heavy drain on your pocket-money? I don’t ask to discourage you, childie; only I want you to consider it all thoroughly, for if you should once undertake this thing and lead Miss Atkinson and Alice to depend on it, there could be no drawing back then.”

“Yes, I have thought about it all. Didn’t you see me working it out in my head this afternoon, like a sum in arithmetic? I think half the money papa gives me for lunches, and presents, and the other things pocket-money goes for, would be just as good for me as the whole; and I am sure with

half of it I could keep Alice along nicely after I once got her started; and its just about this start I want to speak to you now. Papa gave me a hundred and twenty-five dollars to-day to buy me a blue silk gown for Aunt Jane's Christmas-Eve party. Now fifty dollars will get me a lovely white muslin, and a blue sash, and all the fresh little fixings I should need; and that would leave seventy-five dollars, with which I could buy flannels, and boots, and water-proof, and a good, warm, strong outfit altogether, for Alice to commence with. Now do you think papa would be willing? I don't want to ask him, for he doesn't understand silks and muslins, or what Alice needs; but would you answer for him? Just think, mamma, what burdens poor Miss Atkinson has to bear."

Mrs. Mason started to say, — "It is all for her own relations," — but stopped, for the command didn't read, "Relations, bear *ye* one another's burdens." Had she any right to interfere between Kathie and this first work of charity the child had ever been inspired to undertake? Would not this object

of interest outside herself, apart from blue silk gowns, and flounces, and furbelows, do something for her girl that was likely to be left undone otherwise? What a very cold loving-one-another we were most of us doing in this world, after all? So she bent over and kissed the eager, lovely, upturned face that waited for her words, and said fondly, —

“Yes, I will answer for papa, my darling. I approve your plan heartily, but I will not offer help. This shall be all your own good work.”

The next morning Miss Atkinson was told of the new plan. Her faded eyes opened twice as widely as usual. She was not sure she heard aright.

“Do you mean to say Miss Kathie, that you undertake, with your mamma’s full consent, to clothe Alice until she is through school?”

“That is precisely what I bind myself to do,” Kathie answered, gravely copying the solemnity of the little dress-maker.

“Then all I have to say is, bless you, and bless the Lord. You never can tell what good you’re doing.”

And then the poor little woman began to cry, just for pure joy; and she sobbed till Mamma Mason felt her eyes growing misty, and Kathie ran away out of the room.

Be sure that Miss Atkinson made up Kathie's muslin lovingly. It would not be her fault if it were not prettier than any silk. And truly, when Christmas Eve came and Kathie was dressed for Aunt Jane's party, there could hardly have been a more radiant vision than this white-robed shape with the sunny, soft hair, the gleaming brown eyes, and the wild-rose cheeks, where the color came and went. Her father looked her over with all his heart in his eyes, and a tenderness which quivered in his voice, though he tried to speak jestingly.

"So there wasn't blue sky enough for any thing but your sash, and you had to take white clouds for the rest."

"*Just* that. Don't you like the clouds?"

He bent and kissed her.

"Yes, I like the clouds; and I think the sunshine struck through them for somebody."

THE COUSIN FROM BOSTON.

WE had been friends ever since I could remember, Nelly and I. We were just about the same age. Our parents were neighbors, in the quiet country town where we both lived. I was an only child ; and Nelly was an only daughter, with two strong brothers who idolized her.

We were always together. We went to the same school, and sat on the same bench, and used the same desk. We learned the same lessons. I had almost said we thought the same thoughts. We certainly loved the same pleasures. We used to go together, in early spring, to hunt the dainty may-flowers from under the sheltering dead leaves, and to find the shy little blue-eyed violets. We went hand in hand into the still summer woods, and gathered the delicate maiden-hair, and the soft mosses, and all the summer wealth of bud and

blossom. Gay little birds sang to us. The deep blue sky bent over us, and the happy little brooks murmured and frolicked at our feet.

In autumn we went nutting and apple gathering. In the winter we slid, and coasted, and snow-balled. For every season, there was some special pleasure, — and always Nelly and I were together, — always sufficient to each other, for company. We never dreamed that any thing could come between us, or that we could ever learn to live without each other.

We were thirteen when Nelly's cousin from Boston — Lill Simmonds, her name was — came to see her. It was vacation then, and I had not seen Nelly for two days, because it had been raining hard. So I did not know of the expected guest, until one morning Nelly's brother Tom came over, and told me that his Aunt Simmonds, from Boston, was expected that noon, and with her his Cousin Lill.

"She'll be a nice playmate for you and Nelly," he said. "She's only a year older than you two, and she used to have plenty of fun in her. Nelly wants you to come over this afternoon, sure."

That was the beginning of my feeling hard toward Nelly. I was unreasonable, I know, but I thought she might have come to tell me the news, herself. I felt a sort of bitter, shut-out feeling all the forenoon, and after dinner I was half minded not to go over, — to let her have her Boston cousin all to herself.

My mother heard some of my speeches, but she was wise enough not to interfere. When she saw, at last, that curiosity and inclination had gotten the better of pique and jealousy, she basted a fresh ruffle in the neck of my afternoon dress, and tied a pretty blue ribbon in my hair, and I looked as neat and suitable for the occasion as possible.

At least I thought so, until I got to Nelly's. She did not watch for my coming, and run to the gate to meet me, as usual. Of course it was perfectly natural that she should be entertaining her cousin, but I missed the accustomed greeting ; and when she heard my voice at the door, and came out of the parlor to speak to me, I know that if my face reflected my heart, it must have worn a most sullen and unamiable expression.

"I'm so glad you've come, Sophie," she said cheerfully. "Lill is in the parlor. I want you to like her. But you can't help it, I know, she's so lovely; such a beauty."

"Perhaps I shan't see with your eyes," I answered, with what I imagined to be most cutting coldness and dignity.

"Oh yes! I guess you will," she laughed. "We have thought alike about most things, all our lives."

I followed her into the parlor, and I saw Lill. If you are a country girl who read, and have ever been suddenly confronted with a city young lady in the height of fashion, to whom you were expected to make yourself agreeable, you can, perhaps, understand what I felt; particularly if by nature you are not only sensitive, but somewhat vain, as I am sorry to confess I was. I had been used to think myself as well-dressed, and as well-looking as any of my young neighbors; I was neither as well-dressed nor as well-looking as Lill Simmonds.

Nelly was right. She was a beauty. She was

a little taller than Nelly or I, — a slender, graceful creature, with a high-bred air. It was years before they had begun to crimp little girls' hair, but I think Lill's must have been crimped. It was a perfect golden cloud about her face and shoulders, and all full of little shining waves and ripples. Then what eyes she had — star bright and deep blue and with lashes so long that when they drooped they cast a shadow on the pale pink of her cheeks. Her features were all delicate and pure ; her hands white, with one or two glittering rings upon them ; and her clothes ! My own gowns had not seemed to me ill-made before ; but now I thought Nelly and I both looked as if we had come out of the ark. It was the first of September, and her dress had just been made for fall, — a rich, glossy, blue poplin, with soft lace at throat and wrists, and a pin and some tiny ear jewels of exquisitely cut pink coral.

“ Yes,” I thought to myself bitterly, “ no wonder Nelly was dazzled. *She* may like to be the contrast, to help Miss Fine-Airs show off ; but I object to that character, and I shall keep pretty clear of this house while Miss Lill is in it.”

I spoke to her politely enough, I suppose ; and she answered me, it might have been either shyly or haughtily : I chose in my then mood to think the latter. Decidedly the afternoon was not a success.

Nelly did her best to make it pleasant ; but she and I couldn't go poking about into all sorts of odd places, as we did when we were alone, and we did not know what the Boston cousin would like to do ; so we put on our company manners and *talked*, and for an illustration of utter dulness and dreariness commend me to a " talk " between three girls in their early teens, who have nothing of the social ease which comes of experience and culture, and where two of them have nothing in common with the other, as regards daily pursuits and habits of life. Lill talked a little about Burnham's — it was before Loring's day — but we had read no novelists but Scott and Dickens, and we couldn't discuss with her whether it wasn't too bad that Gerald married Isabel and did not marry Margaret.

We might have brightened a little over the supper, but then Mrs. Simmonds, who had been

sitting upstairs with Nelly's mother, was present, —a stately dame, in rustling silk and gleaming jewels, who overawed me completely. I was glad to go home ; but the little root of bitterness I had carried in my heart had grown, until, for the time, it choked out every thing sweet and good.

While the Boston cousin stayed, I saw little of Nelly. I am telling the truth, and I must confess it was my fault. I know now that Nelly was unchanged ; but, of course, she was very much occupied. Whenever I saw her she was so full of Lill's praises that I foolishly thought I was nothing to her any more, and Lill was every thing. If I had chosen to verify her words, instead of chafe at them, I, too, might have enjoyed Lill's grace and beauty, and learned from her a great many things worth knowing. But I took my own course, and if the cup I drank was bitter, it was of my own brewing.

At last, one afternoon, Nelly came over by herself to see me. I was most ungracious in my welcome.

“I don't see how you could tear yourself away

from your city company," I said, with that small, hateful sarcasm, which is so often a girl's weapon. "They say self-denial is blest: I hope yours will be."

Perhaps Nelly guessed that my hatefulness had its root in pain; or it may have been that her own heart was too full of something else for her to notice my mood.

"Lill is going to-morrow," she said, gently.

"Indeed!" I answered; "I don't know how the town will support the loss of so much beauty and grace. I suppose I shall see more of you then; but I must not be selfish enough to rejoice in the general misfortune."

Nelly's gentle eyes filled with tears at last.

"Sophie," she said, "how can you be so unkind, you whom I have loved all my life? I am going, too, with Lill, and that is what I came to tell you. Ever since she has been here, Aunt Simmonds has been trying to persuade mother to let me go back for a year's schooling with Lill, but it was not decided until last night. Mother thought, at first, that I must wait to have my winter things made;

but Aunt Simmonds said she could get them better in Boston, and the same woman would make them for me who makes Lill's."

"Indeed! How well dressed you will be!" I said bitterly. "How you will respect yourself!"

"Sophie, I don't *know* you," Nelly burst out, indignantly. "The hardest of all was to leave you, for we've been together all our lives; but you are making it easy. Good-by."

She put her arms round me, even then, and kissed me, and I responded coldly. Oh how could I, when I loved her so? I watched her out of sight, and then I sank down upon the grass, and laid my head upon a little bench where we had often sat together, and sobbed and cried till I could scarcely see. I was half tempted to go over to Nelly's, and ask her to forgive me; but my wicked pride and jealousy wouldn't let me. Lill would be there, I thought, and she wouldn't want me while she had Lill. So I stayed away.

"The next morning they all went off. When I heard the car-whistle at the little railroad station a mile and a half away, I began to cry again.

Then, if it had not been too late, I would have gone and implored my friend to forgive me, and not shut me out of her heart. But the day for repentance was over.

The slow months went on. I missed Nelly at school, at home, everywhere. I longed for her with an incurable longing. It was to me almost as if she were dead. People wrote many less letters in those days than they do now, and neither Nelly nor I had learned to express any thing of our real selves on paper. We exchanged three or four letters, but they amounted to little more than the statement that we were well, and the list of our studies. One look into Nelly's eyes would have been worth a thousand such.

There were other pleasant girls in town, but I took none of them into Nelly's vacant place: how could I? Who of them would remember all my past life, as she did, — she who had shared with me so many perfect days of June, so many long, bright summers and melancholy autumns, and winters white with snow? I was, as I have shown you, jealous and hateful and cruel, but never for a moment fickle.

At last Nelly came again. It was a day in the late June, and she found me just where she had left me, under the old horse-chestnut tree in the great old-fashioned garden. I knew it must be almost time for her coming, but I had not asked any one about it. Somehow I couldn't. I very seldom even spoke her name in those days. So she stole upon me unawares, and the first I knew her arms were round me, — her warm, tender lips against my own, — and her sweet, unchanged voice cried, —

“ O Sophie, this is good, this is coming home, indeed ! ”

I cried like a very child. Nell didn't quite understand that ; but then she had not had, like me, a hard place in her heart, which needed happy tears to melt it away. I think, in spite of the tears, I was more glad of the meeting even than she. After a little while she said, —

“ Come, I want you to go home with me now, and see Lill.”

Will you believe that even then the old, bitter jealousy began to gnaw again at my heart?

She had been with Lill almost a year; could she not be content to give me a single hour without her? Perhaps she saw my thought in my face; for she added, in such a sad, pitiful tone, "Poor Lill!"

"Poor Lill," indeed! with her beautiful golden hair, and her eyes like stars, and her lovely gowns, and her city airs, "poor Lill!"

"I should never think of calling Miss Simmonds poor," I said, with the old hardness back in my voice.

"You will when you see her, now," Nelly answered gently. "She had a hard fall on the icy pavement, last winter, and she hurt her hip, and it's been growing worse and worse. She can hardly walk at all, now, and she has suffered awfully. But she has been, oh so patient!"

And how I had dared to envy that girl! I was shocked and silenced. I walked along by Nelly's side very quietly. When we got there she took me up into her room, and there I saw Lill Simmonds. I should hardly have known her. The golden glory of hair floated about her still.

The eyes were star-bright yet, but the cheeks which the long lashes shaded were pink no longer, and they were so thin and hollow that it was pitiful to see them.

She wore a wrapper of some soft blue stuff, and on her lap lay her frail, transparent hands. She started up to meet us with a smile which for a moment gave back some of the old brightness to her face, but which faded almost instantly. I sat down beside the lounging-chair where she was lying, but I could not talk to her. The sight of her wasted loveliness was all too sad. After a little while she said to Nelly, —

“Won’t you, you are always so good to me, go and fetch me a glass of the cool water from the spring at the foot of the garden?”

Nelly went instantly, and then Lill turned to me and put her hand on my arm.

“I asked her to go, Sophie,” she said, “because I wanted to speak to you. I wanted to say something to you which it would hurt her to hear. I used to be very jealous of you, Sophie. I wanted Nelly to love me best, but she never

did. She had loved you so long that I could see you were always first in her heart. And now I am glad. I shall never be well again, and when I am gone I would not like Nelly to be so unhappy as she would be if she had loved me first and best. She will miss me, and she will be very sorry for me; but she will have you, and you can comfort her. I am ashamed now of that old jealousy. I think it made me not nice to you last summer."

Lill jealous of me! I was dumb with sheer amazement. And I, how much bitterness and injustice I had to confess! But before I could put it into words Nelly had come back, and a look from Lill kept me silent.

That night, when I went away, I put my arms round my darling and kissed her with my whole heart, as I had not done for a year. She never knew how much went into that kiss, of sorrow and shame and self-reproach.

What months those were which followed! I was constantly with Nelly and her cousin. Mrs. Simmonds was there, but Lill spent most of her

day-time hours with us girls ; to spare her mother, probably, who was with her every night, and also because she loved us both. Sometimes, on fine days, she would walk a little under the trees ; and I have knelt unseen, in a passion of loving humility, and kissed the grass over which she had dragged after her her helpless foot. Growing near to death, she grew in grace. As Nelly said, one day, —

“ Her wings are growing. She will fly away with them soon.”

And so she did. Through the summer she lingered, suffering much at times, but always patient and gentle and uncomplaining. And when the dead leaves of autumn went fluttering down the wind, she died with the dead summer, and upborne on the wings of some messenger of God her soul went home.

Even her mother hardly dared mourn for her, — her life had been so pure and so peaceful, — her death was so tranquil and so happy. I had ceased, long before, to be jealous of her. No one could love her too much. She was my saint ;

and her memory has hallowed many a thought during the long, world-weary years since. I need but to close my eyes to see a pale, patient face, with its glory of golden hair and its eyes bright as stars; and often, on some soft wind, I seem to hear her voice, speaking again the last words I ever heard her speak, —

“Love each other always, my darlings, and remember I loved you both.”

We have obeyed her faithfully, Nelly and I. Through the long years since, no coldness or estrangement has ever come between us. My first and last jealousy was buried in Lill's grave; and Nelly and I have proved, to our own satisfaction at least, that a friendship between two girls may be strong as it is sweet, faithful as it is fond, — the inalienable riches of a whole life.

MISS Y.

MISS HURLBURT had wandered farther into the woods than was her habit, beguiled by the wonderful loveliness overhead, underfoot, all about her. It was an afternoon in early October, but warm as June. The leaves were of a thousand brilliant hues; for one or two nights of keen frost, a week before, had seemed to set them on fire. There were boughs as scarlet as the burning bush before which Moses wondered and worshipped. There were others of deep orange; and others, still, of variegated leaves, where the green lingered and was mixed with scarlet and brown and yellow, till some of them looked like patterns in a kaleidoscope.

Underfoot was the delicate, fresh woodland moss. Sometimes pine needles made the path

soft ; and sometimes, leaves, which had died earlier than their mates, rustled under Miss Hurlburt's tread. Above, high over the flaming tree boughs, was the deep, lustrous, blue sky, with all its heavenly secrets. The air was full of that wonderful, radiant haze of autumn which makes the distance vague with beauty. And the temperature, as I said, was of June ; so warm that Miss Hurlburt had taken off her hat, and let the scarlet mantle fall from her shoulders.

She herself, had a painter been there to study the scene, would have been no unworthy wood nymph. Her figure was full, but not too full for grace. Health and strength were in every line of it. Her fine, abundant hair, like that of which Lowell wrote, "outwardly brown, but inwardly golden," was brushed back from her low, broad forehead, and coiled in a great heavy knot, from which a stray curl or two had escaped, at the back of her proud little head.

She had great brown eyes, full of thought and feeling ; cheeks, in which the rich, warm color glowed ; bright, full, half-parted lips. She car-

ried herself with grace, regal though unstudied. She never consciously remembered that she was Eleanor Hurlburt, — whose father owned the two great factories in the valley, and all the lands far and near, even these royal woods through which she walked, — but, unconsciously to herself, the fact gave firmness and elasticity to her step, and self-possession to her air.

She very seldom wandered alone so far away from home. The factory hands were a necessary part of the great wealth which surrounded Miss Hurlburt's life with ease and luxury; but some of them might not be altogether pleasant to meet in lonely places, — so she usually was driven out in the elegant Victoria, with the spanking bays which were her father's pride, by the decorous family coachman; or drove herself in her jaunty little pony phaeton, with her own man, all bands and buttons, seated in the rumble behind.

But to-day it happened that she was walking. I said "it happened," because we speak in that way before we think; though nothing is farther from my belief than that any thing ever *happens*

in this world which God has made, and in which He never loses sight of the smallest or poorest thing. At any rate, Miss Hurlburt was walking, and she wandered on, until at last she heard a tender little voice singing a tender little song. It was so fine and clear, it might almost have been the carol of a bird, only birds have not yet learned the English language, and *this* voice sang :

“Your brother has a falcon,
Your sister has a flower ;
But what is left for manikin,
Born within an hour ?

“I’ll nurse you on my knee, my knee,
My own little son ;
I’ll rock you, rock you in my arms,
My least little one.”

Such a quaint little song, such a quaint little voice ! Miss Hurlburt wondered for a moment who it could possibly be. Then she remembered hearing that, while she was away in the summer, an elderly English woman and a little girl had been allowed to take possession of the cabin in the woods which her father owned.

It was a little house with two rooms, which had

been built, long ago, as a lodge for hunters ; but which had for several years stood vacant, being too far from the factories to be a convenient residence for any of the hands.

Miss Hurlburt went on a few steps farther, and saw the singer. It was a pretty picture. A little creature, who looked about five or six years old, sat in the door-way tending a battered doll. She was almost as brown as a gypsy, this small waif, but there was a singular grace about her. Her black hair hung in thick, short curls. She had great, bright, black eyes ; lips as red as strawberries ; and teeth as white as pearls.

Miss Hurlburt moved on softly, so as not to disturb her ; and the waif took up her doll, and talked to it wisely and soberly, after the manner of some mothers.

“ Now, Pinky, me love, I have singed you a song. Now you must be good for a whole week of hours, or I shan’t sing to you, never no more. I mean any more, Pinky. Be very careful how you speak, always ; no good children ever go wrong in their talking.”

By this time Miss Hurlburt had almost reached her side.

"Does your child give you much trouble?" she said, in a tone friendly and inviting confidence.

The mite shook her head, with all its black curls.

"Pinky, me love? No; she only gives me trouble when she is bad. She is good most always, unless it rains."

"Is she bad then?" with an air of anxious interest.

"Certain she is: who wouldn't be? She has to stay in the house then; and she doesn't like it. Would you? How can persons be good when they don't have what they want?"

By this time a nice, motherly-looking old English woman had heard the talk, and came forward to the door.

"Missy," she said, "always thinks Pinky is bad when she is bad herself; and Missy is most always cross when it rains."

"What is your name?" Miss Hurlburt asked, bending to smooth the black curls.

"Berenice Ashford," the child answered, in a slow, painstaking manner, as if the words had been taught her with care; "but they don't call me that, — they call me 'Missy.'"

"Is she your grandchild?" was the next question, addressed to the elderly woman, who had set a chair near the door and asked the young lady to sit down.

"No, that she isn't, and I would like much to find out whose child she is. To be sure, I should miss her more than a little, if I had to part with her; but, all the same, I should like to find her kindred. She belongs to gentle-folks, and I can't do for her what ought to be done."

A few more questions drew out the whole story. The woman, Mrs. Smith, had a son in America, who was doing well at his trade of dyeing; and he had sent for her to come out to him. He had sent money enough for her expenses, and she had taken passage in the second cabin of a steamer.

Among her fellow-passengers were Missy and her mother, — the latter a beautiful young lady, Mrs. Smith said, but very pale and sad. She had

complained sometimes of a keen and terrible pain in her heart ; but she had made little conversation with any one. When they were five days out, she had been found in the morning dead in her berth, with Missy sound asleep beside her.

There was no possible clew to her history. In her trunk, full of her own clothes and Missy's, was no scrap of handwriting, no address. The one or two books which were there, bore on their fly-leaves only the inscription "E. Forsyth." She had taken passage as Mrs. Forsyth, but the captain knew nothing more about her.

Mrs. Smith had somehow taken possession of Missy. She had played with the child and amused her a good deal, before her mother died ; and now the little creature clung to her as her only friend.

There was something over a hundred dollars in the mother's trunk, but as yet Mrs. Smith said she had not used it. When she reached New York, instead of being met by her son, an old neighbor came for her to the steamer, brought her the news of his death, and gave her the money — nearly a thousand dollars in all — which he had been saving

to make the new home they were to have together comfortable.

It was an awful blow, and she clung to Missy, then, for it seemed as if the child was all she had left in the world. The captain said that he would advertise for the little one's friends; but, meantime, he was evidently very glad to be relieved of the responsibility of her.

"How happened you to come here?" Miss Hurlburt asked.

"I had always lived in the country, miss, and I didn't want to stay any longer than I could help in New York; and my son had been meaning to bring me here. It seemed a little comfort, to come where I should have come with him. He had engaged with Mr. Hurlburt—the one who owns the big factories—to come here and see to the dyeing; and Mr. Hurlburt was so good as to give me this little house rent-free, for a while. By and by I want to get something to do. If I could be housekeeper somewhere where I could keep Missy, or head-nurse, or something of that sort, it would suit me,—but there's no hurry."

"Mr. Hurlburt is my father," the young lady said, when she had heard the story through. "We must see what can be done. Missy, should you like to live with me?"

The child considered. Then she addressed her doll, inquiringly.

"Pinky, me love, should *you* like to live with the lady? I guess she's good. Would you go, if your mother went?" Then she pretended to listen. "'No, I thank you,' Pinky says; 'she couldn't go without Grandma Smith.'"

"Of course Pinky couldn't," Miss Hurlburt said, laughing. "Well, then, I'll come again to see you, and bring Pinky's new gown."

That evening, at dinner, Miss Hurlburt was radiant. She knew her father liked to see her well dressed, and she made a handsome toilet. She coaxed him into his very best humor by all the arts only daughters of widowed fathers are wont to use; and then, when he was seated comfortably before the open fire, which tempered the chill of the October evening, she unfolded her plan and her wishes.

The beginning and the end were that she wanted Missy,—she must have Missy,—and the middle was that she couldn't be so cruel as to take from Mrs. Smith her one comfort, so she wanted Mrs. Smith. She represented herself as fearfully overworked, in keeping the establishment in order. Now how nice it would be if Mrs. Smith could take all the troublesome details of that off her hands; could see that the house was clean, and the washing well done, and the buttons on. She had needed just such a person a long time, but she hadn't known where to find her; and now here she was, really made to order, as it seemed.

Of course she had her way. The world called Jonathan Hurlburt a stern man, but it was not often he could say "no" to his motherless daughter. The very next day Miss Hurlburt went with her proposition to the little cabin in the wood; and, before a week was over, Missy and Grandma Smith were duly installed as members of the Hurlburt household.

As for the business part of the experiment, Mrs. Smith proved worth her weight in gold, as they

say. Before three months were over, Mr. Hurlburt discovered that she saved him five times her wages in money, and added immeasurably to the household comfort,—indeed, he concluded that she was, as Eleanor had said, really made to order.

As for Missy, with her quaint ways, her odd, old-fashioned speeches, and the little songs she sang, she was speedily the delight of the household. She lost no whit of her affection for Grandma Smith, but it was Miss Hurlburt who was her idol.

“Pinky, me love,” she used often to say to her faithful doll friend, “did you ever see any miss so nice as our Miss Hurlburt? You had better not say you did, Pinky, me love; because then it would be me very sorrowful duty to whip you for telling lies.”

Miss Hurlburt's delight in her little waif was unbounded. She dressed her up, like a child in a story-book. When she drove in her Victoria, Missy always sat beside her, gorgeous in velvet suit and soft ermine furs; and at home Missy was never far away.

Before spring, another strange event took place. I will not say happened, for no chapter of accidents would ever have read so strangely. A young English manufacturer came over to America. Mr. Hurlburt had had, by letter, various dealings with the firm which he represented; and, on hearing of his arrival in New York, wrote, begging a visit of some length from him. The young man, whose object in his American journey was partly business and partly pleasure, saw an opportunity to combine both in this visit, and accepted the invitation.

He amused himself more or less with Missy, as did every one who came to the house; but he had been a member of the household for several days before it occurred to him that she was not Miss Hurlburt's young sister. Under this impression he remarked one night, —

“How curiously slight is the resemblance between yourself and your little sister, Miss Hurlburt!”

“Oh! Missy is not my sister,” was the smiling answer. “She is treasure-trove, Mr. Goring.”

And a little later, when Missy had danced away

in search of Pinky, she told him the whole story. He listened with intense interest.

"And do you know her name?" he asked, at last.

"She says it is Berenice Ashford. You would laugh to hear the slow, painstaking way in which she pronounces it."

Mr. Goring had turned pale as she spoke.

"Excuse me, Miss Hurlburt, but I truly believe your Missy is my niece. My half-brother married against the wishes of his family, and I was the only one of them who ever made the acquaintance of his poor, pretty young wife. Even when he died, last year, the rest would not have any thing to do with her. She had a brother in America, and she wanted to come here, so I took passage for her in the "Asia." She insisted on coming in the second cabin, because it was quieter, she said; but I think it was to save expense, as well. Tom had left her nothing; and, after the rest of the family had rejected her, I could see that it hurt her pride cruelly to let me help her. She should be all right, she said, when she reached her brother. She was

to write me when she got there, but I have never heard a word. I confess that the hope to hear of her was one motive for my coming to this country."

"But she was Mrs. Forsyth," Miss Hurlburt said, in a curiously bewildered state of mind.

"Certainly: Forsyth was my brother's name. Berenice Ashford is the child's Christian name. It was the name of Tom's mother and mine."

"But I wonder you did not know Missy at once."

"Of course to find her here was the very last thing I could have expected. Then I had not seen her for two or three years. I had communicated with my sister-in-law chiefly by letter; and it was my man of business, and not myself, who put her on board the steamer?"

"But her brother? Why has he never looked for his sister nor her child?"

Goring smiled.

"You are bent on making me prove my title to Missy, as one does to stolen goods. I think Mrs. Forsyth must have gone on without writing

to him in what steamer she was coming, and he probably did not know my address. Nor do I think he had ever shown any especial interest in his sister. It was only her indomitable pride which made her so determined to go to him, when the family of her husband rejected her. Now, I think, I have proved property, and I'm ready to pay the cost of advertising."

Just then Missy's voice was heard in the hall, addressing a solemn exhortation to "Pinky, me love," on the duty of never being greedy at table. Miss Hurlburt called her in.

"Missy," she said, "what was your papa's name?"

"I never knew; did you ever know, Pinky, me love? Mamma called him Tom."

"And did you ever hear mamma speak of Uncle Richard?" Mr. Goring broke in, eagerly.

"You do remember, Pinky, me love. It is wicked to look as if you didn't. She said we couldn't go to America and find Uncle John, if Uncle Richard had not given us the money. I remember that, but I had 'most forgotten; so if

you forgot, too, I shall not whip you, Pinky, me love."

"I am your Uncle Richard," the Englishman said with entire calmness of manner and gesture, but with tears in his voice and his eyes. Perhaps he expected the child to come at once to his arms; but she stood there, the same composed, self-poised little mite as ever.

"*Your* great-uncle, Pinky, me love," she announced,—manifesting an unexpectedly clear knowledge of degrees of kinship. "I think maybe we shall like him."

"And you will go with me back to England?" he asked, eagerly; for the little creature's likeness to his dead brother stirred his heart.

"Does *she* say I must?" Missy asked, shyly, looking at Miss Hurlburt.

"I will never say you must, Missy."

"Then, please, Uncle Richard, I am afraid going in a ship wouldn't agree with Pinky; and we'd rather stay here, unless our Miss Hurlburt will go too."

“Soh, soh!” and Mr. Goring smiled a quizzical smile, “I see I have a heart to storm.”

Whose heart he did not say. But he lingered some time in America, coming back at frequent intervals to visit Missy, as he said. The result was that when he returned to England little Missy had become ready to go with him, even at the risk of exposing “Pinky me love,” to the perils of the sea; and Miss Hurlburt, thinking she needed something other than masculine oversight, concluded to go with her and take care of her, having first changed her own name to Mrs. Goring. And they all said what a fortunate thing it was that Mrs. Smith was there to keep house.

THE HEAD BOY OF EAGLEHEIGHT SCHOOL.

THE boys in Eagleheight school made up their minds before the first fortnight of Max Grenoble's stay among them was over that he had no spirit. The truth was, they didn't exactly understand him. They began when he first came to exercise upon him their usual arts of torture, — the initiation ceremonies for all new boys, — and found him practically a non-resistant. They could not, indeed, be quite sure that they even succeeded in vexing him: he was so imperturbable. At last Hal Somers, goaded to a degree of exasperation by the quiet calmness of the new boy, struck him, with the outcry, —

“ There, boys, see how this suits the Quaker.”

It was a sound, ringing blow; but Max only laughed a laugh which had a good deal of scorn in it, and said, —

"That's very little to take." Then regarding Hal curiously, "I looked for a tougher blow than that. To see you, Somers, one would think you had a good deal of strength in your arms; but a bad cause is always weak."

Hal would have liked then to "pitch into him" with whatever of strength he had; but I think he was afraid. So he only turned on his heel, muttered something about a fellow not worth fighting with, and walked away. From that time those who did not vote Max Grenoble a coward pronounced him a mystery. He did not look at all as if he were wanting in spirit. He was a great strong Saxon of a fellow, with the head of a young Greek, covered with thick, short golden curls. I wish I could photograph him for you: he was such an embodiment of fresh, vigorous life, with his clear, fearless blue eyes, his short, smiling upper lip, his well-cut features. He was just the fellow to be popular, if only he had not been misunderstood in the first place, and especially if he had not happened to incur Hal Somers's enmity.

Hal had been there two years, and was a posi-

tive force in the school. He had a large capacity in several other directions besides mischief. He had been the best scholar at Eagleheight before Max came to dispute his laurels with him ; a favorite, therefore, with the teachers, who always passed over his escapades, which were not few, as lightly as they could. In fact he was a sort of ring-leader of the faster boys, and he found time, in spite of his never failing in class, to plan out and head the execution of most of the jollifications which were the terror of the quiet villagers around Eagleheight. He seldom had any of his offences positively brought home and proven, it is true, and the faculty of the institution liked him too well to condemn him on suspicion, or even to try very hard to strengthen suspicion into certainty.

They, the aforesaid faculty, were not at all too ready to give Max Grenoble his due when he first came. He was not, like Hal, of their own training. He had come to them from a rival school, and they were secretly ill pleased to find in him a dangerous competitor with their best scholar. But before six months were over they were

obliged to recognize his claims, and had even come to heartily like him. And, indeed, he was a fellow, as Edmund Sparkler would have said, with no nonsense about him, and likely to make his own way anywhere.

Whenever he had the opportunity to show his skill he was found to excel in all athletic sports; but this was not often, for the boys rather shunned him, and if there were enough for an undertaking without him he was usually left out of it. He had one friend, however, — a poor little weakling of a fellow, named Molyneux Bell, who had been friendless before Max came. Hal Somers and his roystering set had always shoved poor little "Miss Molly," as they called young Bell, to the wall; and it opened paradise to him when great, strong, bright, cheery Max Grenoble took him under his protecting wing. He gave as much as he received too; for Max had a strongly affectionate nature, and would have found himself desolate enough without some one to be fond of. Only "Miss Molly" knew the secret of his friend's non-resistance. One day Max had carried him in his arms

across a stream they came to in one of their walks, and set him gently down on the other side. Molyneux looked up gratefully.

"What great strong arms you have, Max! Why, you carry me as gently as a cradle. I believe you could whip Hal Somers himself, just as easy as nothing. Honest, now, don't you think you could? O, I *wish* you would! The boys wouldn't dare then to call us 'Miss Molly and her sister.'"

Max laughed heartily.

"I shouldn't be much afraid to try it," he said. "The truth is, I have been awfully tempted to pitch in, sometimes. But last year I made up my mind that the Bible meant what it said when it forbade us to return evil for evil and railing for railing. It comes tough on human nature, though, boy human nature at any rate; but there'd be no merit if there was no struggle, and we're put here to fight with the old man in us, as my father calls it."

"But if you'd tell 'em *why* you never knock a fellow down when he sauces you."

Max's face crimsoned like a girl's.

"Don't you understand that a fellow *couldn't* tell such things? at least, I couldn't. I should feel like the Pharisee in the Bible."

At the end of the school year there was to be a competitive examination. The credits for conduct and for recitations were to be taken into account, and the boy who stood highest on the books, and passed the best examination also, was to be the head boy of the school for the next year. From the first the field was abandoned to two competitors, — Hal Somers and Max Grenoble. All Hal's emulation was aroused. He *would* succeed. He even forsook his old ways, and for weeks together engaged in nothing that was contraband. He had really fine abilities. He learned some things more readily than Max himself, and he felt that all his prestige depended on his securing this leadership. Max took the matter more coolly, but still he worked with all diligence. And so, till within ten days of the examination, they were neck and neck.

Just then there came a dark night, — a warm, tempting June night, — when the moon was old,

and only the stars shone, like very far-away lamps indeed, through the dusk. A friend of Hal Somers was night monitor, and doubtless the temptation afforded by such apparent security was too much for mischief-loving Hal. It chanced that Max Grenoble had received permission from one of the tutors to go to the neighboring village of an errand, and this fact was known only to his own room-mate, Molyneux Bell. About half-past nine he was returning, and for greater speed crossed a lot belonging to the president of the institution, which saved him an extra quarter of a mile of road. Half way across the lot he met Hal Somers with three other boys behind him, face to face. Hal carried a small lantern, and a great pair of shears such as are used to shear sheep. The light from the lantern struck upon the shears with a glitter which led Max to notice them. In the hands of one of Hal's followers he saw the long, silvery tail of a white horse, and another carried a bunch of hair of a similar hue, evidently the mane of the same animal.

“Hal Somers!”

He spoke in his first moment of surprise, without consideration ; but there came no answer. The lantern was blown out in a moment, and the boys made the best of their way toward Eagleheight. As Max walked on more slowly he heard a pitiful neigh, and following the sound, he found President King's pet horse, utterly denuded of mane and tail. It was a joke carried a little too far even for Hal Somers's effrontery, he thought to himself. If there was any thing outside of his school that President King loved and prided himself on more than another, it was Snowflake. He gave her something of the fond care a family man bestows upon his children. Every afternoon she was the companion of his solitude, to whom he talked, with a sort of grave humor of his own, as he took his constitutional upon her back. He would not be likely to have much toleration for the young rascals who had shorn her of all her glory. Max went on, reported himself to Professor Vane, from whom he had obtained his leave of absence, and went to bed without hinting what he had seen, even to his room-mate.

The next morning when the school went to chapel, there was a sense of thunder in the air. President King had seen his favorite, as those who were guilty did not need to be told, after one look at his lowering face. He conducted the devotions with more than his usual solemnity, and then detained the school a little longer.

He uttered a few withering sentences, setting forth what had been done, and commenting satirically upon the invention, the gentlemanliness, the good sense of young men whose brains could originate nothing more brilliant or entertaining than the disfigurement of an unlucky quadruped, and an annoyance and insult to a teacher who had at least this claim upon their respect, that their parents had put them under his charge. Then he gave them the opportunity to confess their folly, assuring them that confession was good for the soul, and adding that he should take it as a favor if any one who knew any thing of the affair, whether personally concerned in it or not, would give him all the information in his power. It was not the practice at Eagleheight to ask any indi-

vidual boy whether or not he had been guilty. It was one of President King's notions that to ask such a question of any one who had not manliness enough to confess his fault voluntarily was only leading him into temptation, offering safety as a premium for lying.

As the fellows filed out of chapel, Hal Somers said to his chum, —

"It's all up with me about the leadership. Of course Grenoble will tell, especially now the Prex makes a merit of it."

"Fool if he wouldn't," was the reply, "after the way we fellows have all treated him, too."

All day Hal was in hourly expectation of being sent for to an interview solemn and awful in the president's room. But the hours went on and no summons came. About four o'clock he saw Max Grenoble go into the dreaded chamber of audience. Now, he thought, all would come out. Of course Max had gone to tell all he knew. Would he be suspended, or expelled, he wondered, or would the Prex be satisfied with giving him black marks enough to put the leadership altogether beyond his

reach? Then a plan came to him. The president's room was on the lower floor, and over one of its windows grew a grape vine large enough to conceal him from observation. He would go there and listen. That it was a very mean thing to do he knew as well as any body, but temptation was too strong for him, and giving one look to make sure that he was not observed he hid himself away under the open window. The first words he heard were in the voice of the president :

“As soon as Vane told me you were out last evening, it occurred to me that you would know who was at the bottom of the affair, and it seems you do.”

“Yes, sir,” firmly and quietly.

“Then there can be no possible doubt that it is your duty to tell.”

“It cannot be my duty, sir, to be a sneak. This secret came into my hands by accident. If I had been monitor for the evening, it would, of course, be my duty to make it known. Not having been in any such capacity, *I* think were I to turn telltale I should be no gentleman.”

"It's a new order of things when fifty must come to fifteen to be told what it is to be a gentleman," the president said, hotly. "Perhaps you don't know, sir, that if you persist in your resolution you lose all hope of the leadership? You will be considered an accessory in the crime, and you will lose as many credit marks as would be taken from the ringleader were he detected."

"I can afford to lose those better than my own self-respect," Max said, stoutly, and then added, "I think *you* would have done the same, President King, when you were at my age."

Hal waited to hear no more, but edged cautiously from his place of concealment. He thought he was not above profiting by Max's generosity. He tried to think Max was a fool, but there was an inner voice in his heart which whispered that there was something sublime in such folly, and, try as he might, this inner voice would not altogether be silenced.

The days went on swiftly. Max kept his scholarship up to the highest standard, but the twenty credit marks taken from his list put all hope of his attaining the leadership out of the question.

It was the very night before the examination when President King answered a tap on his door with his well known, resonant "Come in." His visitor was Hal Somers.

The next morning, after prayers, the president said, very quietly, —

"Young gentlemen, before the examination commences I have to detain you long enough to perform a simple act of justice. I acquit Max Grenoble of all complicity in the misdemeanor committed on the night of the 14th of June; the entire burden of the same having been assumed by Henry Somers, in behalf of himself, William Graves, George Saunders, and John Morse. And as this confession was voluntary, I shall visit upon the offenders no severer penalty than the loss of all their credit marks for the last quarter."

Poor little Molyneux Bell forgot time and place, and threw his handkerchief into the air with one glad shout: —

"I knew Max would come out right at last; I knew he would."

So Max went back the next year to Eagleheight,

as the head boy; and under his leadership a new state of affairs was brought about. He led them not only in class, and in athletic exercises, but in all true manliness. They had found out at length that he had plenty of "pluck and grit," even though he might not emulate Sayers or Heenan. One of his warmest friends was Hal Somers, in whose character enough nobility was latent to recognize at last the sterling worth even of his rival.

AGATHA'S LONELY DAYS.

THEY had buried Agatha's mother, — put her away under a sheltering tree, beloved of bird and breeze, which waved its boughs between her and the bending, changeful summer sky. Agatha thought no other spot in the world could be so pleasant or so dear; and she longed, from the depths of her little, ten-years-old heart, to stay there with bird, and breeze, and tree, and the buried mother, who must hear her voice, she thought, even though she could never reply to it again in all the years.

Her father, pale with sorrow himself, had never come near enough to his child to be her comforter now. He talked little to any one of either his joys or his sorrows. Agatha loved him, partly because she had always been taught to love and have faith in him; and, partly, too, because she knew well,

with that childish and intuitive perception which discovers every thing, how dear he was to her mother; but she did not feel near to him, and she could not possibly have told him how she longed to stay there beside that grave. She made no protest when he took her hand to lead her away, though it seemed to her that she left her heart behind her, and that the lump in her breast was a cold stone to which warmth would never come back any more.

She went home, and some one took off her little black hat, and put on an apron over her mourning gown, and then she was left in peace to sit at the window, and look out toward the spot where they had laid her mother, and wonder what was to become of *her*. They called her to supper, but she was not hungry, — she thought she never should be again, — and there was no mother to beguile her with dainty morsels. When they found she did not want to come they let her alone, and still she sat there and wondered.

At last the twilight fell, and in the dusk her father came to her. He loved her very dearly;

and especially now, that her mother was gone, and only she was left to him, he felt for her an unspeakable tenderness; literally unspeakable, for he did not know how to utter one word of it to his child. He longed to comfort her, — to tell her how dear she was to him, — but he could not. He sat down beside her, and looked at her little pale face, outlined against the western window, with such a depth of pity that it seemed to make his voice quieter and colder than ever when he spoke, because it required such an effort to speak at all.

“To-morrow, Agatha, I shall take you to your Aunt Irene. Every girl needs a woman’s care, and she will watch over you as faithfully as if you were her own.”

Agatha never dreamed of objecting. She tried to think that she might as well be in one place as another, for she shouldn’t live long anywhere without her mother. But she dreaded Aunt Irene’s watching, as she dreaded few things in the world. She had made visits now and then at the quiet old homestead of which this aunt was mistress, and it seemed to her, on such occasions, that

Aunt Irene did nothing but watch her from the time she entered the house ; and in those days it had taken all the sunshine of her mother's joyous nature to gild the visits into some substitute for the pleasures other children took in their vacations. Now, to go without her mother — all alone — and be "watched over" by her aunt ! She began to know that she had a heart, after all, by its frightened fluttering.

Aunt Irene was her father's sister, with all the Raymond peculiarities of pride, and reserve, and silence, which made him half a stranger to his own child, intensified in her by her life of seclusion and of absolute authority over herself and her possessions. Her experiences had been narrow, and her aims had been narrow also. Mr. Raymond saw this, his one sister, always at her best ; and, through long knowledge of her, he understood her really trustworthy and excellent qualities. He felt that he was doing for Agatha the best which fate now permitted him to do, in confiding her to this guidance, so sure to be wise, as he believed, even if not loving.

The long car-ride next day was almost a silent one. Agatha would have rejected with hot juvenile scorn, the idea that the presence or absence of any material comforts could affect her grief; and yet she would have felt a little less desolate, I think, if the heat had not been so intense, the dust so choking, and the seat so hard and straight.

When she had made the journey in other years with her mother, how much shorter the way had seemed. The fresh linen frocks she used to wear were so much easier and cooler than the stifling black gown she had on to-day; and somehow her mother knew just when to open the windows and when to shut them, and if the seat was straight and hard, there was always mamma's lap or shoulder to lean against; and she forgot to be weary when mamma beguiled the time by poem or story. But her father rode silently, looking into vacancy for a face he would never see again; and after he had once bought Agatha's ticket, and seated her beside him, it did not occur to him to do any thing to relieve the monotony of the long, dusty ride.

It was dusk when the stage from the railway station set them down at Aunt Irene's door. Agatha walked up the path timidly. It was a long, straight path, and either side of it grew thoroughly well-disciplined flowers; a rosebush on one side, just opposite to a rosebush on the other, — Agatha wondered if either of them would have dared to bear one rose more than the other did, — a peony on one side and its mate opposite; so of a syringa bush, a flowering almond, and a root of lilies. Between the well-marshalled ranks of flowers, which somehow made the child think of soldiers on guard, she followed her father up to the door, where Aunt Irene waited, grim chatelaine.

Mr. Raymond shook hands with his sister, and then said gravely, —

“Irene, I have brought you my poor, motherless little girl,” and Aunt Irene put out her firm, strong, unyielding hand and took the child's into it, then bent and — not kissed her, kisses belonged to the dead days — but laid her lips on her cheek, and so Agatha went in.

Every thing was good and substantial in Aunt

Irene's house. You found there no frail stands which a careless touch might throw over, no brittle ornaments, no egg-shell china. The carpets were dark and rich and sombre. The tables and chairs were all of solid wood, and stood high and square. The sofas were heavy and firm, and the whole air of the place was grave and respectable, as Aunt Irene's surroundings should have been. I am not sure that any light, modern, fancy articles, suggestive of elegant idleness, had they been placed in her rooms, would not themselves have perceived their unsuitableness, and trundled off on their own castors.

The supper which awaited the travellers followed the prevailing fashion of the house. The biscuits were three times as large as the biscuits on other tea-tables. There were no frisky rolls, no light-minded whips or wafers. But there were good old-fashioned preserve, serious-looking cake, and substantial slices of cold meat.

Aunt Irene herself, sitting behind the tea-urn — solid silver, of course — comported with all the rest. She was a solid woman, with no superfluous

flesh, and yet with a well-fed, well-to-do aspect, which was unmistakable. Her head was high and narrow, her features good, her strong hair had disdained to turn gray, and her eyes were keen if cold. Her lips, which had never cooed over babies, or soothed the sorrows of little children, or talked nonsense to any listener, were thin, as to such seldom-used lips seemed natural. They shut tightly over all her secrets.

Agatha's head began to ache furiously, and she could not eat. The room swam round and round till she felt as if she were the centre of a rolling ball, and her chair rocked, she thought, and she was slipping off it, when her father saw her white, strange face and wavering figure, and sprang up just in time to catch her in his arms.

"She is sick, Irene," he said. "Where is her room? Let me carry her there."

While he went upstairs with her she revived, and lifted her tired head from his shoulder to look into his eyes.

"I wish you were not going away, papa," she ventured to say.

"I can't stay on in the old places, where I have lived with your mother, without her," was the answer which came, and which was like giving her a key wherewith to unlock her father's heart, and so made the two nearer to each other than they had ever been before.

"Some time will you come back, and let me live with you?" she whispered, wondering at her own rashness.

"If you are good, dear, and learn to be womanly and helpful, and to take care of yourself, I will come back for you, or you shall come to me, and we will be together always."

No one knew with what passionate yet timid hope Agatha's little heart beat as she lay there alone on her strange, high bed. Womanly and helpful,—that was what he had said, and she would be just that. She would do all Aunt Irene said, and never mind how much she was watched, since watching might help to make her nearer right, and get her ready all the sooner to go to her father and be his comfort.

The very next day he left her. The death of

his wife had seemed to sweep away all his old landmarks. He had been, hitherto, a quiet unadventurous man contented with his narrow routine of daily duty, which always brought him back to the tenderness of her welcoming smile. Now that smile was frozen for ever on her cold lips, and a strange restlessness possessed him. He had meant to stay a few days with Agatha in her new home, but he felt as if the inaction would drive him mad, so he hurried away; and a week afterward Aunt Irene showed Agatha his name in the passenger list of a European steamer.

It was June then, and the gay summer went on working its daily miracles round Agatha's quiet home. Bright birds sang to her, and gay flowers bloomed for her picking; and nature ran riot in a wood a quarter of a mile away, where the flowers asked no leave of Aunt Irene to blow, or the birds to sing. The child used to go there when her daily tasks were done, but she carried with her so sad a heart that nothing seemed to cheer her. She wondered what all the growing things were so glad about, in the summer weather, and, remembering

an old phrase she had heard, she concluded it was because nature was their mother, and nature never died.

“ Oh, Mother Nature, I wish you were a relative of mine ! ” she used to cry, sometimes, with unconscious quaintness ; but before the summer was over, leaning her head so much on the mosses, a sense of kinship began to thrill in her pulses, and before she knew it the pain in her heart was eased a little, and she began to think of her mother, not as buried up and hidden away from her, but as near to her and waiting for her.

Meantime she never forgot her father's words, — “ Womanly and helpful,” — they were the keynote of her life. Aunt Irene wondered at her. She had thought her a mischievous little elf in the old days, but there was no mischief in her now. She herself respected no more religiously the rules of the household than did this little quiet child.

As for trouble, why the creature gave none, — she was learning to do every thing for herself. At last even Aunt Irene grew half frightened at this still patience, which she felt must be unnatural to

childhood. She began to wish that she could hear Agatha laugh or shout, — that sometimes the child would tear her gowns, when she had on her oldest ones, at least, — that she would show some self-will, some little trace of her descent from apple-eating Adam of the old time.

She wrote to her brother how good and quiet his little girl was; but her heart misgave her. She did not know what more she could do to make her small inmate comfortable, but she had a vague sense that Agatha was living an unchildlike life, and was less happy than in the old days when the little girl and her mother came there together.

Mother Nature has her own methods of exacting compensation, and for Agatha's overstrained and unnatural life pay-day came in the autumn. It had grown too cold to lie with her ear on the mosses, listening to the earth's pulse-beats, and the child sat quietly within doors, until one day she turned very pale and rolled off her stiff, straight chair to the carpet, and Aunt Irene picked her up, a lighter weight now than in the spring-time, and carried her to her room.

Dr. Greene was sent for at once, and he looked at his little patient very gravely, and then whispered "typhoid" to her aunt.

Aunt Irene wrote a hurried line to Agatha's father, and then took up her post at the bedside, which for five weeks she scarcely left. She had a heart, only long ago she had concluded it was an inconvenience and locked it up; but now it broke loose from its confinement and half frightened her by its throbbings.

Her brother was very dear to her. She had loved him all his life, after the deep, silent, undemonstrative fashion of those who love but few; and now if this fresh grief was to come upon him how could she bear to see him suffer? But she did not allow these thoughts to interfere with her usefulness at Agatha's bedside. Day and night she watched over the child, who never once knew her, but who constantly mistook her for her mother, and clung to her passionately in the delirium of her fever.

"O mother!" she would say, "I thought I never, never should see you again. No one was

cross to me, mamma darling; but no one loved me since you went away. I've been trying to grow womanly and helpful, so papa would be glad to have me with him by and by; but now you've come and you'll love me whether I'm good or not."

Then again she seemed roaming through the woods.

"Hark," she would say, "hear how the birds sing, and see the gay flowers swing in the wind! Their mother doesn't die, and they have no aunts. O birdies! you don't know how cold Aunt Irene's lips are."

And Aunt Irene, listening, bent over the bed with tears blinding her eyes. Had her life been all a failure? she asked herself. She had tried to do her duty: was it all nothing, because she hadn't loved? Oh! if Agatha would but get well she would find some way to make her happy.

Before the crisis of the child's fever came, her father had arrived. The letter found him in Paris, and he had set out in twenty-four hours upon his homeward journey.

"Is she alive?" he asked, when his sister met him at the door, and started back, shocked by his haggard face.

"Yes, she lives, and the doctor says her fever must turn soon. Come and see her."

The little flushed face had never been so beautiful in its brightest days of health and joy, as now, with the clustering rings of hair framing in scarlet cheeks and large, strangely brilliant eyes. The father's heart almost broke as he stood there, unable to make her recognize his presence. While he watched, she said what she had said so often during the hours of that wasting sickness, —

"I have tried to be womanly and helpful. I think papa will want me after awhile. I hope so for Aunt Irene's lips are cold."

How keenly he reproached himself then for having left her, only God knew. He was a silent man, as I have said, and silently he shared Aunt Irene's vigil without even thinking of rest after his journey.

The next night Dr. Greene waited also by that bedside for the crisis he foresaw. At last the child slept.

"When she wakes we shall know what to expect," he said, and went away into the next room for a little rest. But the father and the aunt never moved. It was midnight, and every thing was strangely, unnaturally still, as it always seems to watchers in the middle of the night, when they heard Agatha call out of the hush and the stillness, with a sudden, glad cry of recognition, —

"O mamma! mamma!"

"Is she dying?" Mr. Raymond's look asked, for his lips refused to speak, and his sister's face made answer, "Not yet."

The hours, the long, slow hours went on. The night grew darker and deeper. Then above the hills there stretched a faint line of dawn-light which deepened at length to rose, and then was shot through by a golden arrow from the rising sun. And then, as the dawning glory touched the little white, still face upon the pillows, the eyes opened, and a voice — Agatha's own natural voice, but oh, so faint and low! — said, softly but gladly, —

"I have seen mamma. I wanted to go with her, but she said papa and Aunt Irene both needed me, and I was to stay here and grow well and happy. And so I shall."

"And so, please God, you shall," Dr. Greene said, cheerily, having come in from the next room; and the father sank upon his knees by the bedside, with some murmured words, which only the Father in heaven understood, upon his lips; and Aunt Irene hurried off, she said, to get something for the child to take, but she stopped a long time upon the way.

"I knew you were here, papa," and Agatha reached out her thin little fingers to touch the bowed head beside her. "I knew, because mamma told me."

Strangely enough, all her timidity had vanished. Mamma had said that papa and Aunt Irene needed her, and that was enough. Soon her aunt came in, and she looked up, gratefully.

"You have been so good to me, Aunt Irene," she said, "so good that I thought it was mamma who was tending me, but I know now it was you,

and I think you must love me, because you have kept me alive."

And so my story of Agatha's lonely days ends; for after this she never was lonely any more. Her father and aunt had learned that little hearts need something more than to be clothed and fed; and Agatha had learned, by their care for her, their love for her, and never doubted again that she had her own place in their hearts.

But had she seen her own mamma? you ask. Ah, who knows the mysteries of the border land between life and death? Some of you will believe that she but dreamed a dream; and others, perchance, will think the Father, who has so often sent His angels to comfort His earthly children, sent to her the home-faced angel whom her heart loved. I cannot tell. I only know that Agatha believed always that a beloved voice not of this world had spoken to her.

THIN ICE.

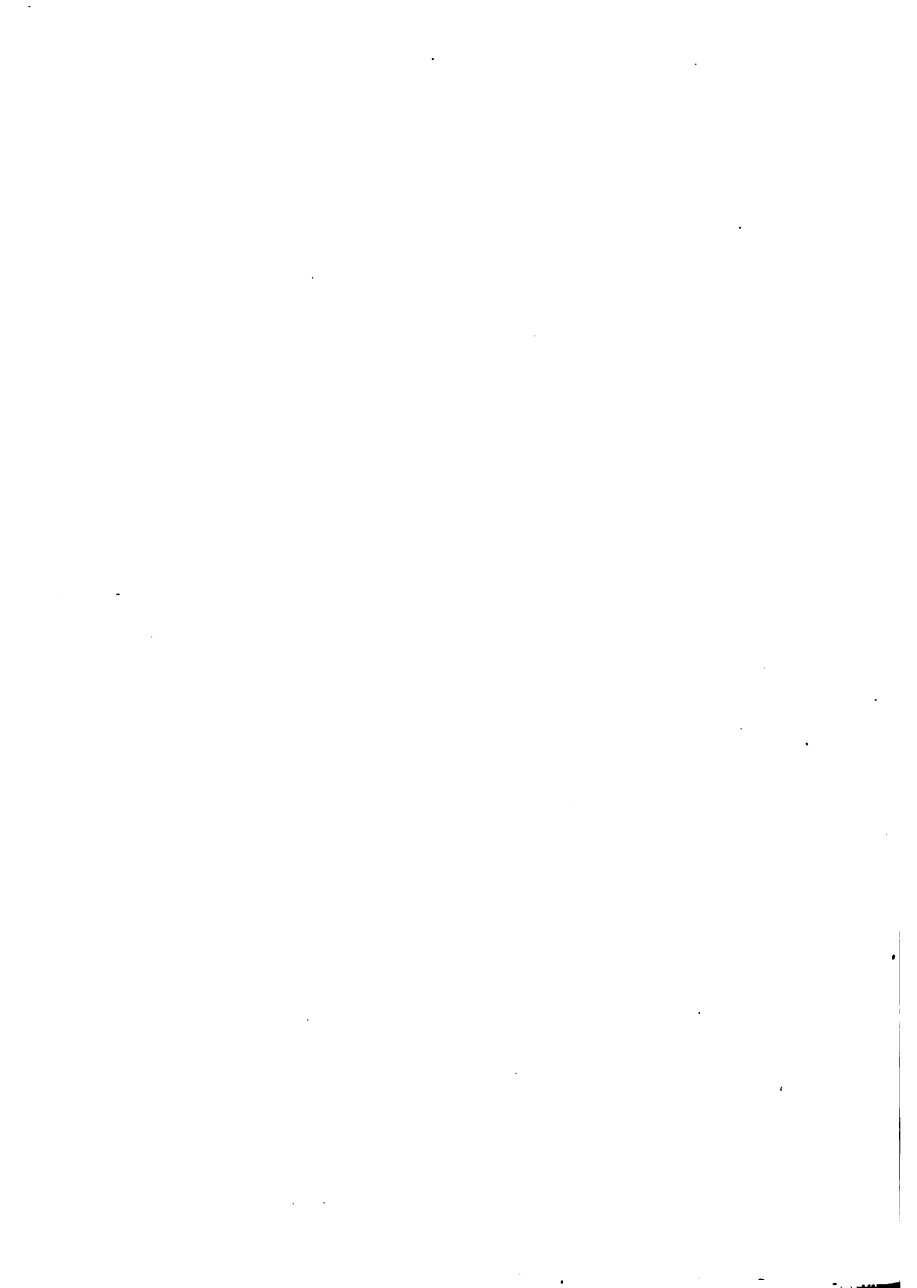
THE little village of Westbrook seemed to have been standing still, while all the rest of the world had gone on. The people lived very much as their fathers and grandfathers had lived before them. They were all farmers except the doctor and the minister.

The doctor was a very skilful man; but he had been reared on a Westbrook farm, and when he went out into the world to get his medical education he had brought back with him, to quiet Westbrook, only the knowledge he sought, and none of the airs and graces of town life.

The minister, too, was Westbrook born and bred, and his wife had scarcely ever been outside the town in all her days, so that there was no one in the simple community to set extravagant fashions, or turn foolish heads by gayety or splendor.



THIN ICE.—PAGE 100.



It was, therefore, as much of an event as if Queen Victoria herself were to come and spend the winter in Boston, when it became generally known that a rich widow lady and her son were to come, the last of September, and very probably stay on through the winter under Dr. Simms's roof. A famous city physician, with whom Dr. Simms had studied once, had recommended him and Westbrook to Mrs. Rosenburgh, when it became necessary for her to take her puny boy into some still, country retreat.

They came during the last golden days of September, and all Westbrook was alive with interest about them. The lady looked delicate, but she was as pretty as she was pale, and her boy was curiously like her,—as pale, as pretty, almost as feminine.

There was plenty of opportunity to see them, for the city doctor had given orders that the young gentleman should keep out of doors all the time; so, mornings, he and his mother were always to be seen in their low, luxurious carriage, drawn by high-stepping bay horses, and

driven by a faithful, careful, middle-aged man, with iron-gray hair and an impenetrable face.

Sometimes, in the afternoons, they would all be out again, but oftener Mrs. Rosenburgh remained at home, and her son drove, for himself, a pair of pretty black ponies, while the impenetrable, iron-gray man sat behind, ready to seize the reins in case of accident.

At first the boy's face seemed often drawn by pain, or white with weariness, and he would look round him listlessly, as he drove, with eyes that saw nothing, or at least failed to find any object of interest. But the clear autumn air proved invigorating, and when the glorious, prismatic days of late October came he looked as if, indeed, he had been re-created.

And now one could see that he began to take a natural, human interest in what went on around him. He would drive up his little pony carriage to the wall, and look over it to watch the apple-pickers and the harvesters. No one spoke to him, and he spoke to no one. The lads of his own age, who watched his ponies with boyish

envy, never dreamed that the owner of these fairy coursers could be as shy as one of themselves, and, indeed, as much more shy as delicate weakness naturally is than rosy strength. They thought his silence was pride, and felt a half-defiant hatred of him accordingly.

Yet many and many a day he went home to his mother, and sitting beside her with his head upon her knee, cried out, in very bitterness, —

“ Oh if I only could be like one of those healthy boys! How gladly I'd give up Pease-blossom and Mustard-seed, to be able to run about as they do! Shall I never, never be strong, mamma? ”

And she would comfort him with the happy truth that every day he was growing stronger, and that she expected him to be her great, brave boy, by and by, who would take care of her all the days of her life.

Meantime, other boys, in other homes, talked to other mothers. For the very first time the evil spirit of envy had crept into quiet Westbrook.

Why should Ralph Rosenburgh have every thing he wanted, and they nothing? What clothes he wore, — and a watch, a real gold watch they had seen him take out of his pocket, — and those ponies; for wherever they began they always ended with those ponies. And, as not all the mothers in Westbrook were wise, any more than elsewhere in the world, while the wise ones would say that strong boy-legs were worth more than horses' legs, the weak ones would foster the evil spirit, and answer, —

“He ain't a bit better than you are, with all his watches and ponies. Pride will have a fall some day, see if it don't, and he may be glad enough to stand in your shoes yet, before he dies.”

Jack Smalley was the son of one of these injudicious mothers, and so his envy grew, unchecked; till he nourished a vigorous hatred for Ralph Rosenburgh in his heart, without ever having exchanged a single word with him.

It was a hatred, however, of which its object never could have dreamed. He had been so accustomed to be petted and pitied, and he was

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so very sorry for himself, that he could not be a wide-awake, vigorous, ball-playing, leaping, running boy, it would never have occurred to him that any one else could fail to see his condition in the same light.

So he went steadily on the even tenor of his way, gaining something day by day and week by week, and hoping — how earnestly no one knew — for the happy time when Pease-blossom and Mustard-seed might stand idle in their stalls, and he go about on his own feet with the rest.

The cold weather came on early that year. Before the middle of December Westbrook pond was frozen over, and then began the winter's fun. Every afternoon Ralph Rosenburgh drove his ponies down to the very edge of the pond, and sat there for awhile, a patient looker-on at the frolics he could not share.

With Christmas, however, there came to him from the fond, maternal Santa Claus, a chair constructed on purpose for pushing over the ice, and then he became a daily partaker in the festivities upon the pond. The chair was modelled

after a certain kind of invalid, garden chair, which is arranged to be either propelled by some one else from behind, or by the occupant turning a kind of crank at the sides.

Ralph soon learned to manage it for himself, and finding himself strong enough to do so, he used to make the iron-gray man stay with the ponies, while he himself moved round among the skaters.

And, now that he seemed really one of themselves, the young people, all except Jack Smalley, began to feel a kindly interest in him. Jack alone went on hating him more and more, finding daily fresh causes of offence in this boy who wore velvet and fur in place of his own coarse gray cloth, and woollen, hand-knit comforter. What was he, this puny wretch, without pluck enough to stand on his own legs, that he should wear the garments of a young prince? You see that Master Smalley had the primitive idea of young princes, and supposed them clad in everlasting velvet and ermine. But there were no princes in America, thank Heaven, and nobody

in Westbrook wanted fools round who tried to look like king's sons. Very innocent of trying to look like any one was poor Ralph, if the truth had been known, — this mother's darling of a boy, who took no more thought of his attire than a weed, but whom Mrs. Rosenburgh wrapped assiduously in all that was softest and warmest, as she had, all his life, surrounded him with warmth and softness.

After a while there came a January afternoon, over which a gray, moist sky brooded. Already the ice had shown some symptoms of breaking up, and everybody was out, making the most of it while it lasted.

Among the rest Ralph Rosenburgh came down to the pond, — left Pease-blossom and Mustard-seed in the iron-gray man's charge, as usual, and began to propel himself over the ice, with arms whose increasing vigor was a daily and happy astonishment to himself.

At last he wandered away a little from most of the skaters. He felt himself and his chair rather in their way, they were wheeling and

zigzagging so swiftly, and he moved along the pond quite rapidly toward the eastern end.

It chanced that no one noticed his course except Jack Smalley, and Jack knew that he was going directly toward a place where the ice had been recently cut, and where it was thin and treacherous now. Slowly Jack followed him.

"I'd like to see him and that fine chair of his get a good ducking," Jack muttered. "It would serve him right. I guess all them prince's feathers and fineries would look a little more like common folks', after they'd been soused."

I do not think another and darker possibility crossed Jack's mind. Hating Ralph Rosenburgh though he did, I do not think one wish for his death had ever entered his heart. He himself had been in the water, time and again, and got no other harm from it than perhaps a hard cold. He did not realize what a different thing it would be for this delicate invalid, seated in his heavy chair. And so Ralph propelled himself along toward destruction, and Jack, with an evil sneer on his face, skated slowly after him.

Suddenly a third figure shot from the group of skaters, — the fastest skater of them all, and the one boy in the world whom Jack Smalley loved, — his own cousin, Nelson Smalley.

He, too, had turned his eyes and seen in what fatal direction the chair with the delicate, golden-haired invalid in it was tending. He did not speak a word: he had but one thought, — to reach Ralph Rosenburgh in time to save him. He skated on, with the swiftness of light. And Jack Smalley saw him coming, nearing him, passing him, on toward the thin ice. Now, indeed, he shrieked at the top of his voice, —

“Nell, Nell, come back. The ice out there is thin. Come back — come back. Don’t you hear?”

“I hear,” floated backward on the wind from the flying figure; “I hear, but don’t you see Rosenburgh? I must save him.”

Then Jack himself skated after, making what speed he might. But he seemed to himself slow as a snail; and already Rosenburgh was very near the treacherous ice, and Nelson was almost

up with him, flying like the wind. He heard Nelson's voice:

"Stop, Rosenburgh, stop. The ice beyond you is just a crust. Stop, you will be drowned."

And then he heard a splash, and looked. It was Nelson, who had gone on, and gone under, unable to arrest, in time, his own headlong speed. And then, while he himself was shrieking madly for help, he saw Rosenburgh, prince's feathers and all, just throw himself out of his chair, and down into the cold, seething water where Nelson Smalley had gone under.

The ice grew thin suddenly, just where the saw had cut it squarely away, so the chair stood still upon the solid ice, and by that Rosenburgh held with one hand, while with the other he grasped the long hair of Nelson Smalley, who was rising for the first time. Excitement was giving him unnatural strength, but for how long could he hold on?

Now, at last, the skaters had perceived the real state of the case, and such a wail as one might hear afterwards through his dreams for

ever, went up to the bending sky. Hurry, all who can. Run, iron-gray man, as you never ran before, or how shall you drive home to that boy's waiting mother?

How was it done? How is it ever done? Who can ever tell in such a crisis? I do not know how long they were in reaching the thin ice, for at such times moments seem hours, and seconds are bits of eternity. But Rosenburgh held on, and the iron-gray man threw himself flat upon the cracking ice, with the boys holding fast to him, and drew them both out, and then Rosenburgh turned limp and white on his hands, and whether he was dead or not he could not tell.

There were enough others to care for Smalley, and already the older ones had begun trying to restore him, and some of the younger were running in various directions for wiser aid. So the iron-gray man just lifted his own young master in his arms, and got him straight into the pony wagon, and drove Pease-blossom and Mustard-seed home as they had never been driven before.

At the gate he met Dr. Simms coming out, and told his story in a few words. It was almost an hour before the blue eyes opened again, and the mother felt sure that her boy was still hers to have and to hold, to love and to cherish. Indeed, it was many days before she felt altogether safe and sure about him. She was constantly expecting some after consequences from his exposure, — some fever, or cough, or terrible nervous prostration. But, strangely enough, he seemed to be none the worse ; and one day, after a careful examination of him, Dr. Simms said to her, —

“I venture to tell you, now, what I have thought all along. This has been the very best thing for him that could possibly have happened. The severe shock was exactly what he needed, though certainly it was what I should not have dared to take the responsibility of subjecting him to. He is going to be the better and stronger for it.”

“And the brave, splendid fellow who was risking his own life to save him ? ”

"Is all right too. Duckings are good for boys, not a doubt of it. Trust me, this cold bath will go far to make a man of yours."

And the doctor was right. The languid pulses which that awful peril had quickened never throbbed so languidly again. It was Ralph Rosenburgh's awakening to a new life. Somehow the shyness in him passed away with the weakness, and he became a general favorite.

The boys no longer envied him his ponies, when one or other of them was always asked to share his drives; and their cure was completed when he grew strong enough to take part in all their sports, when Pease-blossom and Mustard-seed were left to "eat their heads off" in their stall, and Ralph Rosenburgh and his chosen and dearest friend, Nelson Smalley, scaled rocks and climbed hills with the best of them.

This strong friendship would have cost Jack Smalley some envious pangs, perhaps, if the awful terror of that January afternoon had not made him afraid of the evil in his own soul.

MY LOST SISTER: A CONFESSION.

I HAVE a confession to make. When I went home from my grandmother's, — being set down at the home-door by the stage-driver, in whose care I had been placed, — and found my little sister in my mother's arms, a quick growing hate of her struck its black roots in my heart. I know that this seems unnatural. In most houses the baby is the very light and joy of them, — the little idol to whom, from the least to the greatest, the whole family do willing homage.

But remember that I had grown to be ten years old, with no rival near the throne, accustomed to be the first object with my father and mother, petted, indulged, as much "the baby" as if I had worn white long clothes. It was not strange that it should come hard to be deposed from my throne of babyhood in one moment.

When I went into the house, Nurse Sikes met me with a smile which struck me like a blow.

"Somebody's got her nose broke, I guess," she said, with a tantalizing laugh.

Before this, no one had spoken to me about the new-comer, and there, I think, was where the wrong began; but the woman's meaning flashed into my mind in a moment, and I tossed my head scornfully, without speaking. Nurse Sikes was probably not an ill-natured woman, — she could not have been, since no face was so welcome as hers in the sick rooms of all the neighborhood, — but she was a very injudicious one. I suppose my idle, vain contempt and indignation amused her, and so she went on provoking me.

"Ho, ho, Miss Fine Airs! doesn't want to see her baby sister, don't she? Well, to tell the truth, I don't think you'll be much missed. Papa and Mamma are pretty well wrapped up in Miss Baby. *She's* a novelty, you know, and I guess she'll be taken care of, even if you don't trouble yourself."

I would not for worlds have let her see the passion of grief and rage which shook me. I went out of her sight, and fled, not to my own room, which opened from my mother's, but to a remote spare chamber, and there I bore my pain alone.

To cry would have infinitely relieved me, but my evil pride restrained me from that. They should not see my eyes red, and know how I felt; I would die first, I said, bitterly, to myself, I, who had cried out every sorrow of my life, hitherto, on my mother's tender bosom. After a while I heard them calling me, —

“Annie! Annie! Annie! Why, the child came in half an hour ago. Where is she?”

Then I knew I must go down. So I looked at myself in the glass, and saw a face which, indeed, no tears stained, but which was disfigured by pride and passion; and thinking to myself, — ‘No one will notice how *I* look, now,’ I went to my mother's room.

“Come here, my darling,” her gentle voice said, “come and look at baby.”

Baby! Could she not say a fond word to me, after I had been away from home two weeks, without bringing in baby! I moved reluctantly toward her.

"Baby is twelve days old," she went on, wistfully, seeing my sullen mien. "I wouldn't let any one tell you, for I thought it would be such a surprise."

"A surprise, indeed!" I echoed her word with a scorn in my voice, which must have pained that gentle heart sorely.

"Isn't she sweet?" and, still trying to win my love for her new treasure, mamma uncovered the little, dimpled, rosy face, and held it toward me.

"I suppose so; I don't think I care for babies," I said, ungraciously.

"But you do care for mamma, and you haven't so much as kissed *me* yet, my darling."

Perhaps if, even then, she could have put her arms around me, and held me fast against her loving heart, as she used to when I was grieved or naughty, it might have driven away the evil spirit, and made me her own child again; but

she could not, for there, in her lap, was baby. So I took her kiss passively, returned it coldly, and then went away.

It seems so incredible to my grown-up self, looking back upon it, that I could have gone on hating my baby sister more and more, that I can scarcely expect you to believe it; and I think I would hardly write out this, my confession, did I not hope it might lead some other, tempted as I was, to examine her heart in time, and root out from it the evil weed of jealousy, which bears always such bitter fruit.

From the first, little Liliás, or Lily, as they all called her, was a singularly lovely child. As a baby, she cried very little, and never in anger. Nothing but real pain ever made the red lips quiver, or filled the violet eyes with tears. She never could see any face more grave than usual without trying, in her baby fashion, to brighten it. I can remember, oh, how distinctly, times when my father would come home, worn and tired, and she would, quite untold, go through her little rôle of accomplishments till she won a

smile from him, clapping her fairy hands, nodding her gleaming, golden head, showing her two small teeth,—all the little winning wiles she had.

She was a very frail, delicate child, always, and she did not walk nearly as early as other children. But she talked very soon indeed. She was scarcely ten months old, when she learned to call us all by our names; and, strangely enough, mine was the first name she spoke. "Nan! Nan! Nan!" she would call me, half the day, like a little silver-voiced parrot.

She was very fond of me, in a certain way. I never tended her unless I was obliged, and my mother, noticing with deep grief my spirit toward my little sister, waited for the evil feeling to wear itself out, and seldom called on me to amuse the child, or to give up for her sake any whim or fancy of my own. Lily was not used, therefore, to have me hold or play with her.

Perhaps she thought I *could* not, but it seemed to afford her infinite satisfaction just to have me in her sight. It may be she felt, in some vague

way, that I was nearer babyhood than the rest, and so more of her kind. At any rate, she always seemed perfectly happy and content when she could watch me, at any of my pursuits; and when I left the room, the little silvery voice would call after me,—

“Nan! Nan! Nan!”

She was a full year and a half old before she began to walk, and then she was so small and delicate that she looked as you might fancy a baby out of fairy land would look, flitting round on her tiniest of feet, her yellow hair glinting goldenly in every chance sunbeam, and her wistful eyes blue as a blue flower.

How could I help loving her? Ay, how could I?

I fancy I must have loved her a little, even then, only I had grown so in the habit of regarding her as an interloper, a rival, an alien, who was taking from me all which had formerly been mine, that I never owned, even in the silence of my own heart, to any softening toward her.

Father and mother were good to me beyond

my deserts, and beyond my poor words to describe. I have known, since, with what infinite love and grief they sorrowed over me, while waiting for this evil growth in my heart to be uprooted, as they felt sure it would be, some time. They had the wisdom to know that reproof would be vain, and simply to love me and be silent.

But if they loved *me*, and were to me most patient and kind, they were devoted to little Lily, as was natural. She was so frail and so fair, so needed their constant watchfulness, that it is not strange she had it.

One day, when she was two years old and I was twelve, I sat in a corner of the sitting-room, putting a dissected map together, while a lady was calling upon my mother. She looked earnestly and long at Lily; but that was not uncommon; the child's dainty beauty was a pleasant thing to watch. At last, after she had risen to go, she said, as if she couldn't help saying it, —

“Take good care of that little one, Mrs. Allen. She looks to me like one of the children the angels love.”

I saw the quick dew suffuse my mother's eyes, as she made some answer which I failed to hear, and then went to the door with her guest.

Am I to tell all the sad and bitter truth? I understood, as well as they did, that they thought our Lily so frail we should have hard work to make her flourish in the cold soil of the earth; and for one moment a feeling of evil triumph swelled my heart. When she was gone, I should be *all* to my father and mother, as I used to be before she came. They would love me, when they had no one else to love.

I felt a guilty flush mounting to my cheeks, and I swept my map into its box hastily, and got up to leave the room. As I went out of the door Lily's voice followed me, sweetly shrill, — "Nan! Nan! Nan!" and, for the very first time in my life, a conviction smote me that there would be a sense of loss when that voice could never follow me again, with its soft calling, through all the years.

The next summer was a strange, warm, oppressive summer, — the summer of '56. With its July

heats our Lily began to droop. Such care as she had, such nursing, such love! But she had been always like a blossom from heaven, sprung up by mistake in the rough soil of this world, and she needed for her healing the wind which blows for ever through the leaves of the tree of life.

She soon grew so weak that she could not run about any more, but would lie all day, except when, for a change, my mother held her in her arms, in a little rose-curtained crib, out from which the blue, wistful eyes followed all our movements, with a sweet, loving, lingering look, which I cannot describe. On me, in especial, that long gaze used to rest; and never could I leave the room without that sweet, small voice calling after me plaintively.

There came a day, at last, when the doctor sat half an hour by Lily's side, watching her with grave, silent face, and then went into another room alone with my mother. He came out first, and went away, and when she followed him, her eyes were very red. I knew afterwards, what I suspected the moment I saw her face, that he had been telling her that she must make up her mind to part with her little darling.

My heart was not quite stone, after all, for it grew strangely soft and strangely afraid then. She was going home to God, this little Lily of heaven; and would she tell Him that I had hated, all through, the baby sister He had given me? I went away by myself and prayed. I had said my prayers night and morning, all my life, but this was quite another thing, this cry of the child's heart becoming conscious of its guilt and woe, to the pitying Father.

At last, I went to my mother. Lily was asleep, and mamma sat by her side, pale as death, but with face that made no complaint. I knelt down beside her.

"O mother!" I cried, "I have been so wicked, —and now I cannot undo it! Oh, if I could! Oh, if I could only die, —I who am not fit to live, —and let you keep Lily!"

She bent over me, and drew me into her arms, against her bosom.

"If you are not fit to live, my darling, you are not fit to die," she said gently. "I can better part with Lily, for she is pure yet as when God gave

her to me. I have seen your sin and your suffering, and I have known your repentance would come."

"Oh, it has, it has! Mother, how can I bear it? *Will* she go home to God, and tell Him I have hated her?"

"Do you think she could tell *Him* any thing which He does not know? But Lily has never found out what hate means. She has always loved you, and she does not know but that all the world loves her. The pain which your sin has caused has not rested on Lily, — thank God for that."

"But I might have made her happier, — I might have been good to her, — and now, perhaps I shall never have any little sister any more in all the world."

Just then the child awoke, and put out her frail little hands, with a low, sweet call I was destined to listen for in vain through all the empty, after years. I ran to her, and took her in my arms. She saw the tears upon my face, and touched them with her mites of fingers.

"Naughty Nan," she said, in fond reproach, "naughty Nan, to cry, — make Lily cry too."

And then I wiped away my tears, and tried to be cheerful; but, oh, how heavy my heart was! and, mourn as I would, I could not bring back the dead months and days wherein I might have loved my little sister, and had hated her instead.

What else?

Nothing, but that, with the fading summer flowers, she, too, faded and died. In her case was wrought no miracle of healing. "We all do fade as the leaf;" but she had never been a strong, green leaf, tossed by summer winds, freshened by summer rains, gay in summer sunshine. Just a pale, sweet day-lily, that lived her little life, and died with the sunset. And the first words she ever spoke, were the last words, also. She opened her tender eyes after a long silence, during which she had scarcely seemed to breathe, and they rested on me.

"Nan! Nan! Nan!" she cried, as if it were a call to follow her into the strange, new life, the strange, new world, whither, a moment after, she was gone.

If there has been any good in my life since then,

if I have striven at all to be tender and gentle and unselfish, let me offer such struggles as a tribute to her memory, as one lays flowers upon an altar or a grave. Whither she has gone, I pray God to guide my feet also, in His own good time and way; and I shall know that I have reached the place whither my longings tend, when I hear, soft falling through the eternal air, her low, sweet call, —

“Nan! Nan! Nan! Welcome, Nan!”

WHAT CAME TO OLIVE HAYGARTH.

A CHRISTMAS STORY.

IT was the afternoon of the 24th of December, a dull, gray afternoon, with a sky frowning over it which was all one cloud, but from which neither rain nor snow fell. A certain insinuating breath of cold was in the air, more penetrating than the crisp, keen wind of the sharpest January day.

Olive Haygarth shivered as she walked along the bleakest side of Harrison Avenue, down town. She was making her way to Dock Square, to carry home to a clothing store some vests which she and her mother had just completed.

After a while she turned and walked across into Washington Street, for an impulse came over her to see all the bright Christmas things in the shop

windows, and the gay, glad people, getting ready to keep holiday.

She had meant, when she set out on her walk, to avoid them, for she knew that her mood was bitter enough already. She had left no brightness behind her at home. There were but two of them, herself and her mother, and they were poor people, with only their needles between them and want.

They had never known actual suffering, however, for Mrs. Haygarth had worked in a tailor's shop in her youth, and had taught Olive so much of the intricacies of the business as sufficed to make her a good workwoman.

Accordingly they did their sewing so well as to command constant employment and fair prices. But after all it was ceaseless drudging, just to keep body and soul together. What was the use of it all? Not enjoyment enough in any one day to pay for living, — why not as well lie down and die at once?

She walked on sullenly, thinking of these things. An elegant carriage stopped just in front

of her, and a girl no older than herself got out, trailing her rich silk across the sidewalk, and went into a fashionable jeweller's.

Olive stopped, and looking in at the window, ostensibly at the vases and bronzes, watched the girl with her dainty, high-bred air. She noted every separate item of her loveliness,—the delicate coloring, the hair so tastefully arranged, the pure, regular features. Then she looked at the lustrous silk, the soft furs, the bonnet, which was a pink and white miracle of blonde and rosebuds. How much of the beauty was the girl's very self, and how much did she owe to this splendid setting? Olive had seen cheeks and lips as bright and hair as shining when she tied on her own unbecoming dark straw bonnet before her own dingy looking-glass.

She went on with renewed bitterness, asking herself, over and over again, Why? Why? Why? Did not the Bible say that God was no respecter of persons? But why did He make some, like that girl in there, to feed on the roses and lie in the lilies of life,—to wear silks, and

furs, and jewels, and laces, and then make *her* to work buttonholes in Butler & Co.'s vests? Was there any God at all? or, if there was, did He not make some people and forget them altogether, while He was heaping good things on others whom He liked better? She could not understand it. And then to be told to *love* God after all; and that He pitied her as a father pitied his children! Why! that girl in the silk dress could love God, easily, — that command must have been meant for her.

Going on she caught a glimpse of an illumination in the window of a print shop.

"PEACE ON EARTH AND GOOD-WILL TOWARD MEN" was the legend set forth by the brilliantly colored letters.

What a mockery those words seemed to be! There had never been peace or good-will in their house, even in the old days when they were tolerably prosperous, before her father went away.

She walked very slowly now, for she was thinking of that old time. She had loved her father more than she had ever loved any one else.

To her he had always been kind ; he had never found fault with her, and had smoothed all the rough places out of her life. Her mother had been neat and smart and *capable*, as the New England phrase is. Higher praise than this Mrs. Haygarth did not covet. But like many capable women, she had acquired a habit of small fault-finding, a perpetual dropping, which would have worn even a stone, and George Haygarth was no stone.

The woman loved her husband, doubtless, in some fashion of her own, but to save her life she could not have kept from "nagging" him. She fretted if he brought mud upon his shoes over her clean floor, if he spent money on any pleasure for himself, any extra indulgence for Olive ; above all, if he ever took a fancy to keep holiday.

Just five years ago things had come to a climax. Olive was thirteen years old then, and he had brought her home for Christmas some ornaments,—a pin and earrings, not very expensive, but in Mrs. Haygarth's eyes useless and unnecessary. She assailed him bitterly, and for a

marvel he heard her out in dumb silence. When she was all through, he only said, —

“I think I can spare the eight dollars they cost me, since I am not likely to give the girl any thing again for some time. It will be too far to send Christmas gifts from Colorado.”

Mrs. Haygarth's temper was up, and she answered him with an evil sneer, —

“Colorado, indeed! Colorado is peopled with wide-awake men. It's no place for you out there.”

He made no reply, only got up and went out; and, going by Olive, he stooped and kissed her.

How well she remembered that kiss!

Through the week afterward he went to his work as usual, but he spent scarcely any time at home, and when there made little talk. All his wife's accustomed flings and innuendoes fell on his ears apparently unheeded. The night before New Year's he was busy a long time in his own room. When he came out he handed Mrs. Haygarth a folded paper.

“There,” he said, “is the receipt for the next

year's house rent, and before that time is out I shall send you the money, if I am prospered, to pay for another year. I have taken from the savings-bank enough to carry me to Colorado and keep me a little while after I get there; and the bank book, with the rest of the five hundred dollars, I have transferred to you. If I have any luck you shall never want,—you and Olive. You'll be better off without me. I think I've always been an aggravation to you, Martha,—only an aggravation."

He went back again into his room, and came out with a valise packed full.

"I think I'll go away now," he said. "The train starts in an hour, and there is no need of my troubling you any longer."

Then he had taken Olive into his arms, and she had felt some sudden kisses on her cheek, some hot tears on her face; but he had said nothing to her, only the one sentence, gasped out like a groan,—

"Father's little one! father's little one!"

Olive shivered and then grew hot again, as she remembered it; and remembered how wistfully he

had looked afterwards at his wife, reading no encouragement in her sharp, contemptuous face.

"I guess you'll see Colorado about as much as I shall," said Martha Haygarth, sneeringly. "Your courage may last fifty miles."

He did not answer. He just shut the door behind him and went out into the night, — and she had never seen him since, never heard his voice since that last cry, — "Father's little one!"

She felt the thick-coming tears blinding her eyes, but she brushed them resolutely away, and looked up at the Old South clock just before her.

Almost five. The sun had set nearly half an hour ago, and the night was falling fast. How long a time she had spent in walking the short distance since she came into Washington Street! How late home she should be! She quickened her steps almost to a run, went to the clothing store, where she had to wait a little while for her work to be looked over and paid for, and heard the clocks strike six just as she reached the corner of Essex Street, on her homeward way. The dense, hurrying crowd jostled and pressed her, and she turned

the corner. She would find more room on the Avenue, she thought.

She had not noticed that two young men were following her closely. They would have been gentlemen if they had obeyed the laws of God and man. As it was, there was about them the look which nothing expresses so well as the word "fast." Their very features had become coarse and lowered in tone by the lives they led; and yet they were the descendants of men whose names were honored in the State, and made glorious by traditions of true Christian knighthood.

On the other side of the way, alike unnoticed by Olive and her pursuers, a man walked on steadily, never losing sight of them for a moment. At last, as she came into a quiet portion of the street, the two young men drew near her. They were simply what I have said, "fast." They perhaps meant no real harm, and thought it would be good fun to frighten her.

"Where are you going, my pretty maid?" said one, the bolder and handsomer of the two.

"My face is my fortune, sir, she said," re-

sponded the other, in a voice which the wine he had taken for dinner made a little thick and unsteady.

"You ought not to be out alone," the first began again. "You are quite too young and too pretty."

"That she is," a loud, stern voice answered, "when there are such vile hounds as you ready to insult an unprotected girl."

Surely it was a voice Olive knew, only stronger and more resolute than she had ever heard it before.

She turned suddenly, and the gas light struck full on her flushed, frightened, pretty face, which the drooping hair shaded. The man, who had crossed the street to come to her rescue, looked at her a moment, and then, as if involuntarily, came to his lips the old, fond words, the last she had ever heard him speak, —

"Father's little one!"

He opened his arms, and she, poor tired girl crept into their shelter. The two young men stood by waiting, enough of the nobility of the old blood in them to keep them from running away, though

their nerves tingled with shame. George Haygarth spoke to them with quiet, manly dignity.

"When I saw you following this girl I had no idea she was *my* girl, whom I had not seen for five years. It was enough for me that she was a woman. To my thinking it's a poor manhood that insults women instead of protecting them. I meant to look out for her, and, be she who she might, you should not have harmed her."

"We never meant her any real harm," the elder of the two said humbly; "but we have learned our lesson, and I think we shall neither of us forget it. Young lady, we beg your pardon."

Then they lifted their hats and went away; and George Haygarth drew his daughter's hand through his arm and walked on, telling his story as he walked.

He had been unsuccessful at first. For more than eighteen months he had scarcely been able to keep himself alive. Fever had wasted him, plans had failed him, hope had deserted him. The very first money he could possibly spare he had sent home, with a long loving letter to the absent, over

whom his heart yearned. But money and letter had both come back to him after a while, from the dead-letter office.

"Yes," Olive said, "we were too poor to keep on there after the year for which you paid was out, and we have moved two or three times since then. The postman did not know where to find us, and after the first year we gave up asking for letters at the office."

Her father's hand clasped hers tighter, in sympathy, and then he told the rest of his story.

He had never been very prosperous, never seen any such golden chances as the mining legends picture, but he had come home better off than he ever should have been if he had stayed in the East.

For a whole week he had been in Boston searching for them everywhere, and no knowing how much longer he might have had to wait but for this accident.

"Don't say accident, father," Olive answered, softly. "It was God's way of bringing us together. I begin to see now what it means when the Bible says, 'He is touched by our infirmities, and pities

our necessities.' And yet, only this afternoon I was losing all my faith, and thinking that if He cared for all the rest of the world He had forgotten me. Here we are, — the next house is home."

"Your mother — how will she receive me, Olive?"

Olive's heart seemed to stand still. Her mother had been so bitter through all these years; had said such cruel things about this man, whom she accused of deserting his family and leaving them to starve, of caring only for himself. She did not speak, — she did not know what to say.

"You must go in and break it to her," George Haygarth said, as they climbed the stairs of the humble tenement house, the third story of which the mother and daughter occupied. "I will stay outside and wait. It won't be coming home at all if Martha doesn't bid me welcome."

Olive went in, trembling.

"Here is the money, mother."

Mrs. Haygarth reached out her hand for it and looked at it.

"Yes, it's all right; but I thought you were never coming home. What kept you?"

"I looked into the windows a good deal as I went down, and then I had to wait at the store, and I've been thinking, mother. It will be five years next week since father went away. What if we could see him again?"

She paused, expecting to hear some of the old bitter words about her father; but, instead, her mother's voice fell softly upon her ear.

"*I've* been thinking too, Olive, and I believe he is dead. I don't think I used to be patient enough with him, and perhaps I wore his love out. But he *did* care for *you*, and seems to me nothing short of death could have kept him away so long."

"But if you *could* see him, mother?" Olive persisted, with trembling voice.

Some new thought pierced Martha Haygarth's brain. A strange thrill shook her. She looked an instant into Olive's eyes. Then, without a word, she sprang to the door and threw it open. Olive heard a low, passionate cry.

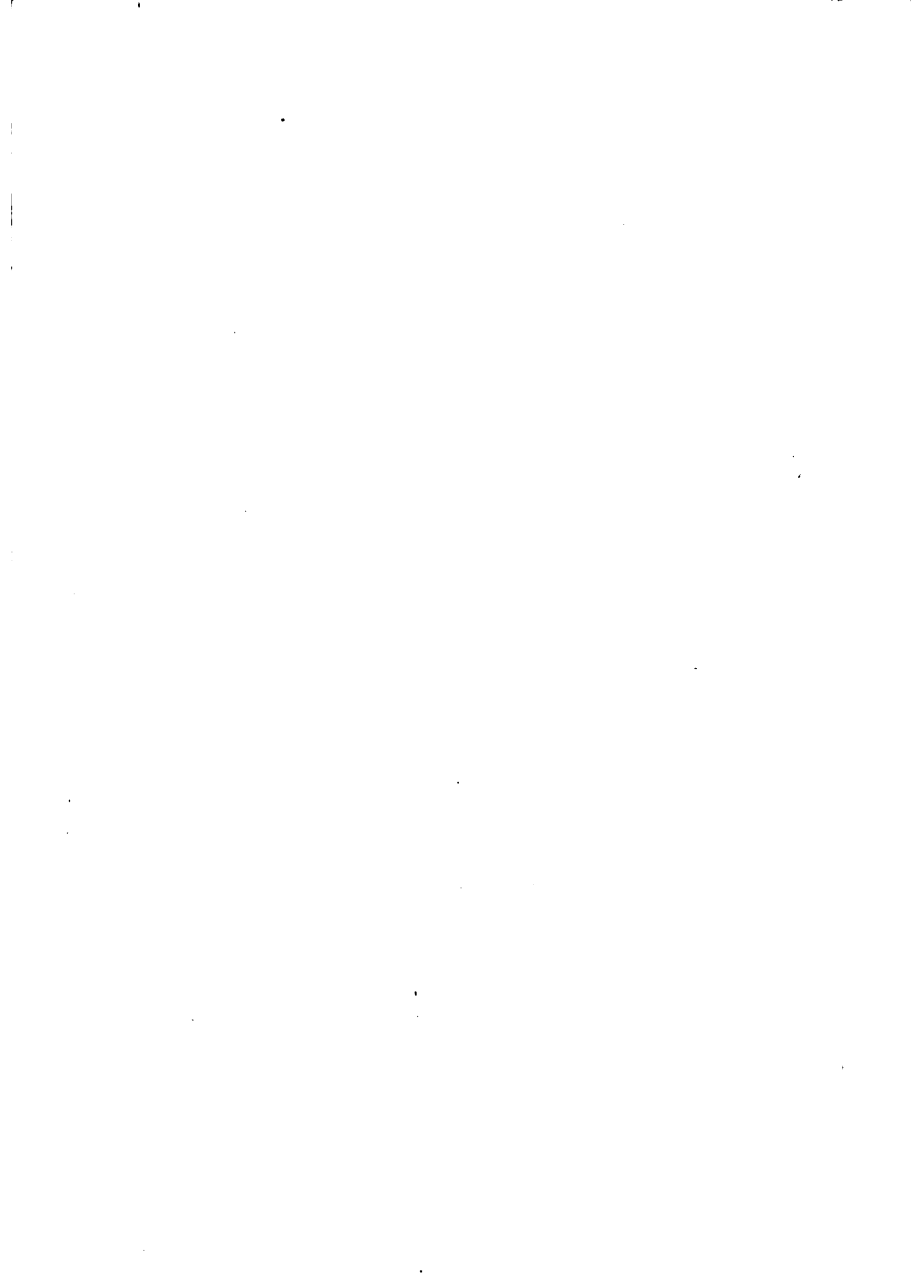
"George! George! if I was cross I *did* love you!" and Olive saw a figure come out of the shadow and take her mother close in its arms. And

then she hid her eyes, and said a little prayer, she never knew what.

So, after all, God had not forgotten them. Just when their want was sorest their help had come. And they needed all they had suffered, perhaps, to teach her mother what love was worth, and what forbearance signified.

“PEACE ON EARTH AND GOOD-WILL TOWARD MEN!”

From the very sky the words seemed to drop down to her, like an angelic blessing; and now to their home the reign of peace had come, and she understood what the benediction meant.





UNCLE JACK. — PAGE 143.

UNCLE JACK.

“**W**HAT young bears most boys are!” said my Uncle Jack, watching his oldest hope pushing his sister in the swing so vigorously that she almost fell out, and then pulling one side of the rope at a time, making her fairly dizzy with swaying from side to side while she alternately screamed and entreated.

“Just about the same, all of them,” Uncle Jack went on. “Talk about boyish chivalry, I never found it, especially toward a boy’s own kith and kin. There may be some Highland Marys with juvenile adorers, but nine times out of ten a boy would rather frighten a girl than kiss her. My John here’s just a specimen. Come here, sir,” raising his voice. “Do you want to hear a story about the days when I was just such another cub as yourself?”

This suggestion brought John and his sister both in from the swing. When Uncle Jack began to "spin a yarn," as he often called it, all the family were sure to want to be present at its unravelling.

"You see," he began, "my sister Nelly wasn't my sister at all; but it was all the same, as far as my feeling for her went. When I was only three years old my mother's best friend died, and left Nelly, a little, wailing, two-months-old baby, to my mother's care. Her father had been killed before she was born, in a railroad accident, so there was no one but my mother to see to her; and she brought the little thing home and adopted her, thankfully enough, for though she had four good stout boys, of whom I was the youngest, there was never a girl in the family till Nelly came.

"We all loved her, as she grew older. She was a pretty little blossom as you would want to see, with her black eyes, and the crisp, black hair falling about her rosy cheeks. She had a funny little rose-bud of a mouth, too, and the daintiest little figure,—well-made all through, and no mistake about it.

"I think I loved her, if any thing, better than

the rest did, considering that she was nearer my age, and so we were more continually together, but, bless you, there wasn't any chivalry in it. It didn't keep me from painting her doll's face black, or hiding its shoes, or from listening when she was talking with her girl cronies, and then bursting out among them, and yelling their choicest secret to the four winds.

"I would have knocked any boy down, from the time I was big enough to use my fists, who had said a saucy word to Nelly; but I said plenty of them myself. I believe I liked to tease her for the sake of hearing her beg me not to; just as I've seen you tease your sister a hundred times, Master John.

"You would think she would have hated me: but that's one curious thing about girls and women; they don't always hate where you would naturally expect them to; and Nelly cared a good deal more about me than I deserved. She seemed to be proud of me, because I was a great, strong, roystering fellow, and she never bore malice for any of the tricks I served her.

“ I have wondered many a time since how I could have had the heart to torment her, for she never once tried to revenge herself on me, nor can I recollect her ever being angry with me. When I got myself into disgrace with parents or teachers, it was always her gentle voice which pleaded for me, and hard enough folks found it to say no to her, whether it was the dark eyes and bright cheeks, or a little winning, coaxing way she had.

“ When I was fourteen and Nelly was eleven we went one day to a huckleberry picnic. We had great fun all the afternoon, and stayed a good deal later than we meant to, so that it was almost dark when we started to go home. We had two miles to walk, and the first half of the distance our way lay with the rest of the company. I had got well stirred up by the general merriment, and wasn't half satisfied with the frolic ending there.

“ Nelly, I remembered afterwards, was very quiet, and seemed tired. She was a delicate little thing, any way, and got worn out with fatigue or excitement a good deal sooner than most of her mates. Finally our road turned off away from the

rest, and led through a long pine wood. As we went on under the thick trees it grew darker and darker, and Nelly cuddled up closer to my side.

“You’d have thought that at fourteen I was old enough for chivalry, and that sort of thing, if I was ever going to be; but not a bit of it, — I was just a great, strong, rollicking boy, with some heart, to be sure, but liking fun better than any thing, and headstrong and inconsiderate to an extent which I am ashamed to remember. Full still of unexhausted animal spirits, and, as I said, not half satisfied with the frolic I had had, I began, in default of other amusement, to tease Nelly.

“I told her a ghastly story or two, and then I would rush away from her among the thick trees, as if in pursuit of something, and come back again to her side, in a few minutes. I wanted her to scream after me, but she didn’t. She was so still that I actually thought she didn’t care; and after a while I grew vexed because I couldn’t vex her, and make her implore me to stay with her, and confess her dependence upon me.

“At last, when we were about a third of a mile

from home, a path led through the woods, branching off from the main path on which we were, to the farm where my greatest crony lived. I thought of something I wanted to say to him. Here was a chance, to tease Nelly well, — let her see whether she was just as comfortable without me as with me.

“ You look at me as if you didn’t believe I could have been such a brute ; but I was, and what is more, I did not at all realize at the time that I was doing any harm. That Nelly would have a little scare, and hurry home somewhat faster than usual, was the most I apprehended ; so I said, with a sort of boyish swagger, —

“ ‘ It just occurs to me that there is something I want to say to Hal Somers, and we are so near home now that you won’t be afraid, so I’ll just branch off there. Tell mother I had supper enough at the picnic, and she needn’t wait for me.’

“ It was too dark to look at Nelly, or perhaps her white face, sad and frightened as I know it must have been, would have turned me from my purpose. She did not speak one word, and I struck off at a tearing pace through the woods.

“By the time I had reached Hal Somers’s place, I began to get sobered down a little, and to feel somewhat uncomfortable about what I had done. I had to wait a few minutes before I could see him, but I did my errand briefly, and it was not more than an hour after I had left Nelly before I myself was at home. I found mother in the porch, looking out anxiously.

“‘I’m so glad you’ve come, children,’ she cried, when she heard my footsteps, and then, as I drew nearer, ‘Why, Jack, where is Nelly?’”

“‘Here, I suppose,’ I answered, trying to face the music boldly. ‘I left her about an hour ago in the woods, where the path branches off to go to Hal Somers’s, and she had nothing to do but to come straight home.’

“‘You left Nelly in the woods, an hour ago!’ my mother cried, in a tone which made my heart stand still, and then turn over with a great leap. And then she sprang by me like some wild creature, and called through the darkness to my father to come with his lantern, quick, quick, for Nelly had been alone in the dark woods for an hour.

“Instantly, as it seemed to me, my father and my oldest brother were following mother along the woodland path, and I stole after them, feeling like a second Cain. It was but a very few minutes before we came up to Nelly, for there she was, just where I left her. She had sunk to the ground, and was half sitting there, her back leaning against a tree beside the path. The light from the lantern flashed on her face, a face white and set as death, but with the wide-open eyes glaring fearfully into the dark beyond.

“It was my mother who touched her first; and felt to see whether her heart had stopped beating.

“‘Is she dead?’ my father asked huskily.

“‘I don’t know. It seems to me I can feel the very faintest throb, but I cannot tell until we get her home. If she isn’t dead, I am afraid she is worse, — frightened out of her senses, for ever.’

“Then father and William made preparations to carry her. I asked, timidly, if I could help. I think none of them had noticed before that I was there.

“‘You!’ my father said, with such concentrated

scorn and wrath in his voice as I cannot describe ; and then mother said, more mildly, but so sadly it was worse than any anger, —

“‘No, I trusted her to you once. I supposed you loved her.’

“So I saw them move off, carrying her between them, and I followed after like an outcast, until it occurred to me that, at least, I could call a physician. So I flew by them like the wind, and off on the road to town. By some singular good fortune, if we ought not always to say Providence and never fortune, before I had gone forty rods I met Dr. Greene, who was coming in our direction to visit a patient. So I had him with me on the door-stone when they brought Nelly in.

“I did not dare to go into the room where they carried her ; but I waited outside in an agony which punished me already for my sin. At last my mother had pity on me and looked out.

“‘She is not dead, Jack,’ she said, ‘but she is still insensible, and until she is restored to consciousness there is no telling what the result will be.’

“Then an awful terror came over me, which I cannot put into words. What if she died, or what if she never had her reason again? Who in that house would ever bear to look at me? When Cain had murdered his brother he had to go forth alone, — what was left for me, another Cain, but to go also alone into the world?

“We lived nine miles away from a seaport town from which whaling vessels were continually starting, and it came into my mind that I might ship on board one for a three years’ cruise; and, by the time it was over, the folks at home might have learned to forgive me for being in the world. So off through the night I hurried.

“How strangely our ways seem made ready for us, often, in the great moments, big with fate, of our lives! I found a whaler which was to sail in the early morning, a captain disappointed in one of his green hands, whose place I could have, and before I had been half an hour in the town my bargain was made, I had been fitted out with necessities, and I went into a tavern to write a note to my mother.

"A strange, incoherent note it was ; but it told her where I was gone and why, and begged her, whatever came, to forgive her boy, who loved her, and who might never see her again.

"Never mind about the long, long days, and weeks, and months which followed, — the empty hours of solemn nights and gusty days, during which I was face to face with my own soul.

"Of course before a week had gone by I was sorry enough for the rash step I had taken. It seemed to me I could not live for three years and not know what had become of Nelly. I would have gone barefoot to the ends of the earth to find out about her, but I could not walk the sea. I was growing so wild with grief and anxiety that I sometimes think I should have walked overboard some night, and so ended all my pain for this world, if Providence had not raised me up a friend in my need — only a common sailor, and a man whose strange history I never knew, but a gentleman and a scholar, in whose locker were Milton, and Shakespeare, and Don Quixote.

"I had studied pretty well at school ; and was

rather forward than otherwise, for a boy of fourteen ; and I have sometimes thought no course of study in any school would have been so much to me as was the entire absence of frivolous and worthless literature, and the constant companionship of these great minds. Besides these, I read daily in my pocket Testament ; and I owed a great deal also to the instructions and explanations of the friend who was, as it has always seemed to me, God's especial gift to my needs.

“ Our voyage appeared destined, at first, to be a highly successful one ; but just as we were nearly ready to return, we encountered a storm which strewed the sea with wrecks. We saw our vessel go down, but we were fortunate enough to escape in our boats ; my friend and I, and two or three more, were with the second mate in his boat, and we were soon separated from the others. We made land on a fruitful island, peopled by savages who were not unfriendly ; but it was many months before, at last, we got away in an East Indiaman, and while we were on the island my friend had died suddenly, leaving untold the story of his life.

"I will not enter into the particulars of my return home, — how from port to port and ship to ship I made my way, until, at length, after five years of absence, I sighted the well-known landmarks of the old town from whence I embarked.

"How familiar it all looked to me! I knew every field through which the homeward road led, and I walked the nine miles between the town and my father's farm in the night, as I had done before. It was three o'clock of a September morning when I reached the old place, and I had nearly two hours to wait before there were any signs of life about it. For now, after all these years, I had not the courage to summon them from their rest. How I passed those waiting hours, divided betwixt hope and fear, you can guess. I lived over in them all the torturing anxieties of the last five years. Was Nelly dead or alive? Should I ever see my mother again? What had changed, while the old house among the trees had stood so still?

"At last I heard a sound. A door opened, and my mother, who of old always used to be

the first to move, looked out. Her hair was white, and her thin cheeks were pale; but I knew the kind eyes that looked forth to meet the morning, and should have known them despite any amount of change. I sprang forward to greet her.

“‘Mother,’ I said. She knew my voice and turned toward me trembling.

“‘O Jack, Jack! I thought you were dead long ago. O my boy, my own boy!’

“And her arms were round my neck, her tender lips were kissing me; and so she drew me in, into peace, shelter, home.

“‘And Nelly?’ I asked, half afraid to call the name.

“‘Nelly is well. Oh, if you had but waited to see. She was ill for awhile, but no serious harm came to her; and, instead, it was my own boy who went away to break my heart.’

“‘And has come back to heal it,’ I cried, growing bold and merry with my relief and joy.

“By this time the rest heard us, and came to the scene,—father, brothers, and last of all,

Nelly; such a beautiful Nelly of sweet sixteen, ten times fairer and brighter than my brightest memories of her, and all ready to forgive me, and make much of me.

"*Then* was when the chivalry began. *Then* I was ready enough to fetch and carry for Miss Nelly of the dark eyes and the bright cheeks."

"Oh," said John, laughing, "then when a fellow is nineteen he can be chivalrous to his own sister?"

"Very likely he can," Uncle Jack answered, "but my experience doesn't prove it; for I began to be glad, very soon indeed, that Nelly was only my adopted sister, after all. It was a good while before I got my courage up to ask her whether she would trust herself to me on the long home stretch through life. Be sure that I promised her, if she would, that I'd never leave her in any dark places."

"And what did she say?"

"Oh! I mustn't tell her secrets. Go and ask her. There she comes, with her first grandchild in her arms. Her cheeks are not bright now, she

says, but somehow they look to me just as they used to look ; and I know her eyes are as dark and deep as ever ; and though I call her ‘ mother,’ with the rest of you, when you are all round, there is never a night that I don’t say to her, before she goes to sleep, ‘ God bless you, Nelly ! ’ ”

NOBODY'S CHILD.

THE summer sun was warm in the five-acre lot, and the east porch was cool and pleasant, so the owner of the lot lingered in the porch and talked awhile with his wife. He had married her only the April before, and to live with her and love her had not yet grown to be an old story. It would be her fault if it ever did grow to be one; for he was a tender, kindly man, this Marcus Grant, with a gentle and clinging nature, and a womanly need of loving.

His wife, though she was young and pretty, with bright eyes, and bright lips, and soft, waving hair, was harder than he, and colder, and more selfish. But she had given him all the heart she had, and in these early days she cared very much indeed about pleasing him, and keeping him satisfied with her; or, rather, making

him continue to admire her, for quiet satisfaction on his part would not have been enough.

He had thrown himself down on the door-stone, and his head was leaning against her lap, as she sat on her low chair in the porch, and ran her fingers in and out of his thick chestnut hair, thinking to herself what a fortunate woman she was to be the wife of this manly, handsome fellow, whom so many girls wanted, and the mistress of his well-filled, comfortable house.

From this east porch where they sat they could see down the long line of dusty road that led to the church and the few houses clustered round it, which passed for a village. The farmhouse stood on the top of a high hill; and up this hill they now saw a woman toiling slowly. The summer sun burned fiercely down on her, the dust rose with every step in a choking cloud about her, but still she struggled on.

Little events are full of interest in country solitudes, and both Grant and his wife watched the wanderer with curiosity.

“ Well, I never saw her before, that’s certain,”

the husband said, after a long look as she drew nearer.

"Nor I," returned his wife. "But see, Mark, she has a baby in her arms. She's trying to keep the sun off it with that shawl; and, sure as you live, she is turning in here."

"Why, so she is;" and Grant rose to his feet.

"May I sit down in the shade and rest?" asked the stranger, drawing nigh. She spoke in a clear, silvery voice, which betrayed some of her secrets, since it was the voice of a lady, and also it was the utterance of despair, for its hopeless monotone was unvarying.

"Certainly," and Mrs. Grant rose and offered her own low chair, for clearly this was no common tramp.

"And might I trouble you for a glass of water?"

"I'll go for some fresh," Grant said, full of hospitable intent.

But before he got back with the water he heard his wife calling him, and hurrying forward at the sound, he found her holding the stranger's

head on her shoulder, and the baby, who was just opening sleepy eyes, in her arms.

"Quick, Mark, do something. I think she is dying. She must be sun-struck."

And so it proved. No one ever knew how far she had toiled in that intense heat, with the baby in her arms, — no one ever knew any thing more about her, for when the sun set, which had scorched and withered her life, she, too, was gone to unknown shores. She spoke only once after she asked for the glass of water, and that was just before she died. The baby, in another room, uttered a cry, and she tried to turn her head toward the sound.

"It is your baby," Mrs. Grant said, kindly, "but she is all right. What do you call her?"

The strangest change came over the dying face: it may have been only a foreshadowing of death, but it seemed more like a mortal agony of renunciation and of despair.

"Nothing," she said, as evenly and with as little change of inflection as if she were already a ghost; "nothing: she is nobody's child."

But in half an hour after that she was dead, and Mrs. Grant, who was very literal in her ideas, always thought that the stranger had not known what she said; but, she used to add, the child *was* nobody's child, for all they should ever know about it.

After the mother was buried, she began to think it was time to dispose of this child, which was nobody's. She was not without heart, and she had worked diligently to fashion small garments enough to make the little creature comfortable; but now, she thought, her duty was done, and she wondered Mark said nothing about taking the baby to the alms-house.

At last, one evening, she herself proposed it. Her husband looked at her in mild surprise. He supposed all women loved babies by instinct, and he took it for granted that of course his wife wanted this one, only she probably thought he wouldn't like it round.

"Why, did you think I wouldn't let you keep it?" he asked quietly. "I think God has sent it to us, and we've really no right to turn it over

to any one else, to say nothing of the pleasure it is to have the little bundle."

As I said, Mrs. Grant was still in a state of mind not to be satisfied without her husband's admiration. She would not have fallen short of his ideal of her for any thing; she would, at least, *seem* all that he desired her to *be*. She was quick enough to understand that he *would* think less of her if he saw her unwilling to keep the baby, so she smiled on him with what cheerfulness she could summon, and treated the matter as settled.

Thus the child, which was nobody's, grew up in the Grant household. She had been six months old, apparently, when she came there, and by midwinter she began to totter round on her little feet, and to say short words.

But no one ever taught her to say papa or mamma, those lovely first words of childhood. What had nobody's child to do with such names?

It might have seemed strange to most people that Julia Grant did not love this little thing, so thrown upon her mercy in its tender babyhood.

But, despite theories, all women are not fond of children. Every woman is, perhaps, fond, in a blind, instinctive way, of her own; but the more heavenly love which takes all children in its arms and blesses them is not by any means universal.

The most powerful trait in Mrs. Grant's character was a silent, unobtrusive selfishness. The whole world revolved, to her thought, about *her*. Rains fell, dew dropped earthward, winds blew and suns shone for Julia Grant. She had consented with secret reluctance to keep the child, and from that moment a root of bitterness and jealousy had sprung up in her heart. If her husband had thought much of *her* comfort, she used to say to herself, he would not have wanted to put all this care upon her.

She was quite ready, therefore, to be jealous, and to feel as if something was taken from her every time he tossed the little one in his arms, or called it a pet name; and after a while — not at once, for he was naturally the most unsuspecting of men — some instinct revealed this to

him, and made him, lover of peace as he was, very chary of manifesting in his wife's presence any especial tenderness for the little stranger within his gates.

But summer and winter came and went, and with their sun and shade nobody's child grew on toward girlhood. She had a great deal of beauty, of a shadowy, delicate kind. She was seldom ill, but she was a very frail-looking child. The quick, changeful color in her cheeks, the depth of feeling in her dark eyes, the tremulous curves about her mouth, all indicated an organization of extreme sensitiveness; a nature to which love would be as the very breath of life, but which was too shrinking and timid ever to put forth any claims for it, or make any advances.

For ten years she was the only little one in the Grant household. Their affairs prospered, they grew richer every year, as if nobody's child had brought a blessing with her; but it was a constant source of bitterness to Mrs. Grant that they were laying up for strangers, or perhaps for this waif, whom no one else claimed, and

who seemed likely to remain in their house for ever, like some noiseless, unwelcome shadow.

But at last, when the child had been for ten years her unwelcome housemate, to Mrs. Grant herself was given a little baby girl, God's messenger of love, as I think every child must be, to every mother. Never had baby a warmer welcome. The preparations made for her were worthy of a little queen, and she opened her eyes on a world of love and of summer.

But perhaps no one, not even her mother, lavished upon her such a passion of devotion as the poor little waif, nobody's child, who had never in her life before had any one whom she dared to caress. Perhaps her devotion to baby touched Mrs. Grant's heart; at any rate she saw that she could trust the little one to her without fear, and so nobody's child became a self-constituted but most faithful nurse and body-guard to this other child, whom loving hearts were so proud and glad to own.

And little Rose—for so they named the summer baby—clung to her young nurse with a fond

tenacity, very exacting and wearing, indeed, but unutterably sweet to the shy girl whom no one else loved. She began to feel that she was of some use, — even she had her own name and place in the world; and this reminds me that I have not yet told you her name. She had been christened Annette soon after she came under the Grant roof, but little Rose called her “Nanty,” and this odd title was the very first word that small person ever spoke. She was a lovely baby, one of the rosy, fat, dimpled, laughing kind, and so thoroughly healthy that she seldom cried, except when “Nanty” disappeared for a moment from her sight. The touch of her baby fingers seemed to make Marcus Grant and his wife both young again. Day by day some line of care faded out of their faces, which time had begun to harden. The mother smiled, as she had never smiled before, on her baby; and here, at last, was an object on which the father’s great, loving heart could lavish itself, unblamed and unquestioned.

Rose was a year and a half old, when one cold

winter night her father and mother were persuaded to go to a house warming, a mile away. Mrs. Grant was seldom willing to leave her baby, but this gay company was to assemble at the new house of one of her best friends, and she took a fancy to be present.

“ ‘Nanty’ will be just as careful of Rose, to do her justice, as I should,” she said; “and I think it’s only neighborly to go.”

Her husband, always sociable in his nature, assented readily enough; and eight o’clock saw them well tucked in under the buffalo robes of their sleigh, and started for the scene of festivities.

“Nanty,” for her part, was well content. Rose was already asleep, her little cheek, pink as the heart of one of her namesake flowers, resting on one dimpled hand, while the other was tossed above her head, as we have all seen babies sleep. The maid-of-all-work went off early to her bed in the next chamber, and the man, who had a family of his own not far away, took his departure, and then “Nanty” raked up the fire, and crept softly into bed beside little Rose.

It was nearly midnight when she woke, roused from her slumber by a light, a vivid, red light, brighter than day. In one moment she realized her position. The house was on fire, and the flames were already far advanced.

She sprang to the door and opened it, but it was only to be met and driven back by a sheet of fire. There was no hope of escape that way. Rose was her only thought. If she could save the child, she did not care for herself.

She opened the chamber window. 'The leap seemed desperate to her timid gaze, but the snow underneath the window might break the fall. Then she thought of something better. She caught the blankets from the bed, and rolled Rose in them hurriedly, then dragged off the feather-bed, by an effort of uttermost strength, and forced it through the window; and then, reaching out as far as she could, she dropped Rose, closely wrapped in the blankets, upon the bed, and sprang herself from another window, lest she might fall upon the child.

For her there was no bed underneath, and no

wrapping of soft woollens. Heavily she fell to the ground, and a violent shock, followed by deadly pain, told her that she had broken her arm. She thanked God, in that breathless moment, that it was not her leg, for somehow she must move Rose to a place of safety, out of reach, at least, of falling timbers. How she did it she never could have told, but in thirty seconds Rose and the bed were out of the yard and across the street, and then she sank down beside her charge, utterly unconscious.

Mr. and Mrs. Grant were driving home after the festival when they caught the gleam of a wild, strange light in the direction of their own home.

"The house is on fire!" Mrs. Grant cried, with white lips.

"Rose!" the father answered hoarsely, and whipped his horse into a run. A quarter of a mile away from home they met the maid.

"Master, mistress," she screamed after them, "the house is on fire, and I'm going for help."

They did not stop for questions. Had "Nanty" also forsaken little Rose?

But they found "Nanty" at her post, though at first they thought she was dead. The mother pulled away the blankets from the little bundle beside her, and Baby Rose rubbed her chubby hands into her sleepy eyes.

"Where is I?" she said, "and what for you make morning so soon?"

"O Mark, Mark! she's all right," the mother cried, in a passion of joy. "'Nanty' has saved her;" and then she bent over the little girl in her thin night-gown, and took her by the arm.

"Nanty, Nanty!"

She had seized the broken arm, and the pain roused the fainting girl.

"Yes'm," she said, starting up. "I'm so sorry to be good for nothing just now, when you want me so much, but I broke my arm jumping out."

Afterwards, when the family had found a new shelter, the whole story came out. The maid, Judith, had read herself to sleep, and her candle had tipped over and set the bed on fire. The

flames had aroused her to a terror which utterly swept away whatever presence of mind she might have had under other circumstances, and without one thought for Rose or "Nanty" she had hurried off to call the neighbors to the scene of action.

One might have feared that the fright and exposure would prove fatal to one so frail and delicate as "Nanty" had always been; but by the time her arm was well healed she was stronger than ever before, drawing new life, as it seemed, from the love and care lavished on her so freely; for now even Mrs. Grant's heart had opened and taken her in.

One day Marcus Grant said to his wife, —

"But for 'Nanty' we should have had no child at all. It seems hard that she, who saved our darling, should be nobody's child herself."

"You think we ought to adopt her, and make her ours legally?" his wife answered, smiling cheerfully. "I have been thinking the same thing myself. We will do it when you please,

for I believe God sent her to us, to be our own, just as much as ever He sent Rose."

So it came about, before another spring, that "Nanty" was no longer nobody's child. Father, mother, and little sister all belonged to her, and she had name and place in life, and a happy home where love smiled for ever.

MY LITTLE GENTLEMAN.

FOR a year the great house rising on the summit of Prospect Hill had been an object of interest and observation, and a chief subject for talk to the quiet country neighborhood surrounding it. Hillsdale was an old town — a still, steady-going farming place — where the young men ploughed the unwilling fields, and coaxed reluctant crops out of the hard-hearted New England soil, as fathers and grandfathers had done before them. But in all the generations since the town was settled, no one had ever thought of building on Prospect Hill. It had been used as pasture ground, until now, when a man from Boston had bought it, and had had a road made to its top, and a house built on its very brow.

This house was a wonder of architectural beauty.

“With its battlements high in the hush of the air,
And the turrets thereon.”

It was built of a kind of mixed stone ; so that its variegated coloring had an air of brightness and gayety very unusual. The farmers about were exercised in mind over the amount of ox-flesh and patience required to drag stone enough for the great building up the high hill ; but that did not trouble the architect, who gave his orders composedly, and went on with his business, quite unheeding comment. The house, itself, puzzled the neighbors, with its superb, arched dining-hall, its lovely, frescoed drawing-room, its wide passages, its little music-room, and its great library all lined with carven oak. Then, why there should be so many chambers, unless, indeed, Mr. Shaftsbury had a very large family.

But it was when the furniture began to come in that wonder reached its height. Such plinishings had never been seen before in Hillsdale. The carpet on the drawing-room must have been woven in some loom of unheard-of size ; for it seemed to be all in one piece, with a medallion in the centre, a border round the edge, and all over its soft velvet—into which your feet sank

as into woodland moss—the daintiest flowers that ever grew. Marble statues gleamed in front of the great mirrors; and pictures of lovely landscapes, and radiant sunsets, and handsome men, and fair women, hung upon the walls. In the music-room were placed a grand piano, a harp and a guitar. The shelves which ran round the library on all sides, half way from floor to ceiling, were filled with substantially bound books; and above them were busts of great men by whom immortal words had been written. It was a dream of beauty all through,—and when it was finished, and a troop of servants, men and women, came to make all things ready, expectation reached its height.

A presidential progress could hardly have excited more interest than did the arrival of a quiet, gentlemanly-looking man, dressed in gray, with iron-gray hair and beard, at the little railroad station, where a carriage had been sent down from Prospect Hill to meet him. This, of course, was Mr. Shaftsbury. He was accompanied, in spite of the many chambers, by a family of only

two, — a lady much younger than himself, dressed with elegant simplicity, with a face full of all womanly sweetness, and a boy, about twelve or thirteen, apparently, — a high-bred little fellow in his appearance, but somewhat pale and delicate, and in need of the bracing air of Prospect Hill.

They drove home in the sunset, — this little family of three, — and looked for the first time on their new abode. Mr. Shaftsbury had selected the location, and bought the land, somewhat more than a year before; and then had put the whole matter into the hands of a competent architect, while he took his family to Europe, so that the new residence had as entirely the charm of novelty for him as for the others.

For a month after that he was to be seen busily superintending matters about his place in the forenoon, while his wife and boy sauntered along, never far away from him, or driving with them in the pleasant May afternoons, — always these three only, and always together.

The first of June, the summer term of the dis-

trict school began. It was an intense surprise to the scholars to find, first of all in his place, young Shaftsbury, from the hill. "Robert Shaftsbury, thirteen years old," he replied to the teacher, who asked his name and age. He studied quietly till recess, and even then lingered in his seat, with evident shyness, though he watched the others with a look of interest on his face. They stood apart, and talked of him among themselves, instead of rushing out at once to play, as was their wont.

At last, after a good deal of wonderment and talk, one boy, bolder or more reckless than the rest, marched up to him.

"I say, Velvet Jacket, how came you here?" was his salutation. "Seems to me you're too much of a gentleman for our folks."

A slight flush warmed young Shaftsbury's pale cheeks; but he answered, with frankness as absolute as his courtesy was perfect:—

"I have been taught at home, up to now, but my father wants me to be with other boys of my own age; and he says a true gentleman belongs everywhere."

The boys all heard what he said ; and, in spite of their boyish rudeness, it inspired them with a certain respect. That was the beginning of the title which they gave him, among themselves, of "little gentleman," — *only* among themselves, at first ; though afterwards, when they grew more familiar with him, they used to address him by it, more often than by his name.

If there had been a philosophical observer to take note of it, it would have been curious to watch how unconsciously the boys were influenced by my little gentleman, — how their manners grew more gentle, — how they avoided coarse or unclean or profane words in his presence, as if he had been a woman. He led his classes, easily, in their studies. The teacher had never to reprove him for carelessness in his duties, or for broken rules. His father had said, "A true gentleman belongs everywhere ;" and he was quietly proving it.

The scholars liked him, — they could not help it, for his manner was as courteous as his nature was unselfish and kindly ; and yet in their feel-

ing for him there was a little strain of envy, — a slight disposition to blame him for the luxury and elegance to which he was born ; and, because of his very courtesy, to underrate his courage and the real manliness of his character.

But there was one in whose eyes he was, from first to last, a hero. Jamie Strong was yet more delicate than young Shaftsbury. He had something the matter with one of his ankles, and could not join in the rough sports of the others. He was the only son of his mother, and she was a widow. Her husband and her other three children had all died of typhoid fever, and been, one after another, carried out of the little, lonesome cottage at the foot of the hill, where the sun seldom came, and now Jamie was the last.

He would never be strong enough to do hard work. Sowing, ploughing, mowing, harvesting, — he could never manage any of these ; so for his weak limbs his quick brain must make up ; and Widow Strong had determined that he should be a scholar, — a minister, if it pleased the Lord to call him to that ; if not a teacher.

So she quietly struggled on to keep him at school, and to earn money to provide for future years of academy and college. She sewed, she washed, she picked berries,—she did any thing by which she could add a dollar to her hoard.

Jamie understood and shared her ambition, and studied with might and main. He was used to harshness and rudeness from stronger boys, and he had grown shy and shrunk into himself. To him the coming of my little gentleman was as grace from heaven. Here was one who never mocked at his feebleness, or his poverty,—who was always kind, always friendly, and who did many a little thing to make him happy. Young Shaftsbury on his part was quick to perceive the tender and loyal admiration of the other; and there grew between them the tie of an interest which had never been put into words.

It had been a damp and strange summer, intensely warm, even in that hilly region. It had rained continually, but the rains, which kept the fields green and made vegetation so unusually

lush and ripe, had seemed scarcely to cool at all the fervid heat of the air. Wiseacres predicted much sickness. Indeed, several cases of slow fever were in the town already.

One day my little gentleman looked about in vain for his friend Jamie, and finally asked for him anxiously, and found that the boy was ill of typhoid fever. At recess he heard the boys talking of it.

"He'll never get well," one said. "His father died just that way, and his three brothers. You see it's damp, down in that hollow, and the sun hardly ever touches the house. I heard Dr. Simonds say it was ten to one against anybody who was sick there."

When school was over Robert Shaftsbury hurried home. He found his mother sitting, dressed all in white, in the music-room, playing a symphony on the piano, while his father sat a little distance off, listening with half-closed eyes. He waited until the piece was over, and then he told his story and preferred his request.

The doctor had said it was ten to one against

any one who was sick in that little damp house in the hollow ; and he wanted Jamie brought up the hill to their own home. He watched the faces of his father and mother as he spoke ; and it seemed to him that a refusal was hovering upon their lips, and he said, earnestly, —

“ Don’t speak, just yet. Remember that he is his mother’s only son, as I am yours. If I lay sick where there was no hope for me, and some one else might, perhaps, save me by taking me in, would you think they ought to try it, or to let me die ? ”

Mr. Shaftsbury looked into his wife’s eyes.

“ Robert is right,” she said, with the sudden, sweet smile which always seemed to make the day brighter when it came to her lips. “ If the poor boy can be helped by being brought here, we must bring him.”

“ I will go and see,” Mr. Shaftsbury answered, at once.

“ And I, too, papa,” said my little gentleman.

“ Not you, I think. I fear contagion for you.”

"I think there is no danger for me, living on this bright hill-top, in these great, airy rooms,—but even if there were, I am sure you would let me go if you knew how much Jamie loves me."

"Come, then," his father said, quietly. He had been, all his son's life, preaching to him of heroism and self-sacrifice and devotion. He dared not interfere with almost his first opportunity for any real exercise of them. So the two went down the hill together.

It chanced that they met Dr. Simonds coming away from the house, and proposed to him the question of the removal. It would not do, the doctor declared at once,—the disease had made too much progress. To remove him now would be more dangerous than to leave him where he was.

"Then I must go and see him," Robert said, resolutely. "You know he has only his mother, and I must spend all the time I can spare from school with him."

"But I will send an excellent nurse, my son.

Do you not see that I cannot have you expose yourself?"

"Send the nurse, too, please, papa; but do not keep me from going. He will not care for the nurse, and he does care very much for me. I do not believe in the danger, and I know how glad he will be to see me."

Mr. Shaftsbury hesitated. This boy was as the apple of his eye. Must he indeed begin so soon to look danger in the face, for the sake of others? But dared he withhold him, when the boy felt that honor and duty called? It ended by his walking in with him quietly.

It was something to see how Jamie's face brightened. He had been very dull and stupid all day, his mother said, and some of the time his mind had been wandering. But now a glad, eager light came into his eyes, and a smile curved his parched lips. He put out his hot hands.

"Oh! is it you, my little gentleman?" he said: "I had rather see you than any thing else in the world."

"Well, then, I will come every day as soon as I am through school," Robert Shaftsbury answered.

"Do you know what you have done?" his father asked, when, at last, they stood outside the house together.

"Yes, papa. I have promised that poor, sick, helpless little fellow all the comfort I can give him. I have promised to do by him as I should want him to do by me if I were Jamie Strong, and he was Robert Shaftsbury."

Mr. Shaftsbury was silenced. This, indeed, was the rule of living he had taught. Should he venture to interfere with its observance?

So my little gentleman had his way. He took every precaution which his mother's anxiety suggested, such as going home to lunch before he went to the little cottage where the sick boy lay and longed for him. But he went regularly. And no matter how wild Jamie might be, his presence would bring calmness. The dim eyes would kindle; the poor, parched lips would smile; and Mrs. Strong said the visit did Jamie more good than his medicines.

At school the boys looked upon my little gentleman with a sort of wondering reverence. They all knew of his daily visits to the fever-haunted place, which they themselves shunned, and they marvelled at his courage. This was the boy they had fancied to be lacking in manliness, because he was slight and fair, — because he was carefully dressed and tenderly nurtured ! They said nothing ; but in a hundred subtile ways they showed their changed estimate.

The days went on, and with them Jamie Strong's life went toward its end. The doom of his house had come upon him ; and love and prayers and watching were all, it seemed, of none avail. One night the fever reached its crisis, and the doctor, who watched him through it, knew that the end was near. Jamie knew it, also. When the morning dawned he whispered faintly to his mother, —

“ I shall never see another morning ; but oh, if I can only live till night, and see my little gentleman ! ”

She proposed to send for him ; but that was not what the boy wished.

"No," he said, feebly, "I want to see him coming in, at the old time, with some flowers in his hand, 'and make a sunshine in a shady place.' Somebody said that, mother, I forget who; I forget every thing now; but that's what *he* does; he makes a sunshine in this shady place."

A dozen times that day it seemed as if the breath coming so faintly must be his last; but he clung to life with a strange, silent tenacity. At last, just a few moments before it was time for the accustomed visit, he said, —

"Kiss me good-by, mother. I want to save the rest of my strength for him.

She kissed him, with her bitter tears falling fast. He put up a hand so thin that you could almost see through it, and brushed the tears away.

"Don't cry," he said; "it hurts me. Life here was hard, and up above Christ says it will be all made easy."

Then he was silent, and presently Robert came with a great bunch of white lilies in his hand.

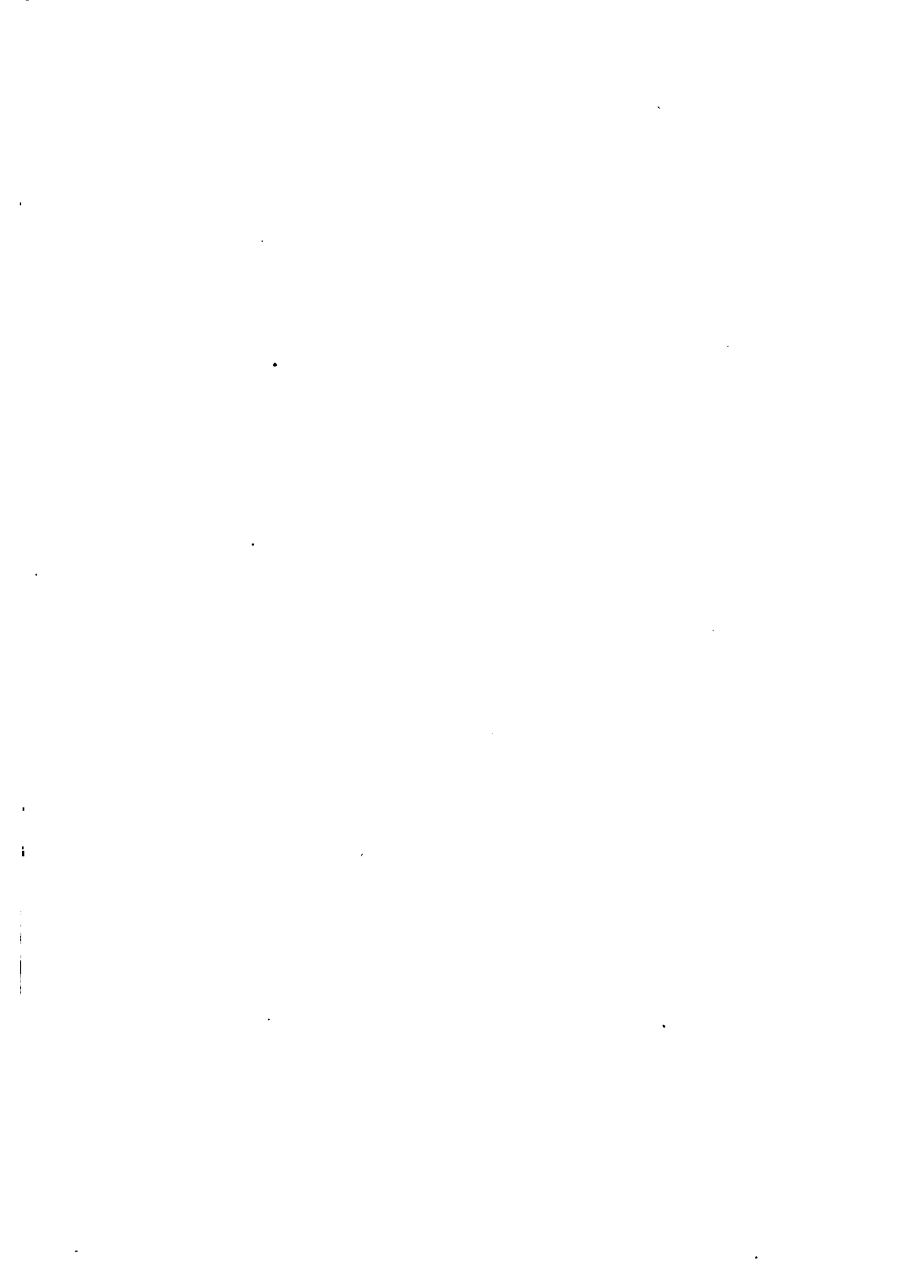
"The lilies of heaven," murmured Jamie, in a

low, strange tone. Then into his eyes broke once more the light which never failed to respond to Robert's coming, and a wan smile fluttered over his lips, as a soul might flutter before it flies away.

"I am going now," he said. "I waited to say good-by, my little gentleman. Do you think they are all gentlemen up there?"

With this question his life went out, and voices we could not hear made answer.

This was the beginning of Robert Shaftsbury's career. No harm came to him through his presence in the fever-tainted house,—but he had learned a lesson there. The one thing for which he has striven in life is to be a gentleman ; and his interpretation of that much-abused phrase he finds in the Book which tells us to do unto others as we would that they should do unto us.





RUTHY'S COUNTRY. — PAGE 191.

RUTHY'S COUNTRY.

IT was such a strange, sad, old face to be on such a young, slight form, that you could not help looking at it again and again. Otherwise there was nothing remarkable about her. She was just a girl sweeping a crossing, in a bustling, dirty street, on a muddy, sloppy March day.

She was thinly clothed, but not more so than others of her class; and there was nothing in particular to make me notice her except this queer, expressive, melancholy, unyouthful countenance. She wore a worsted hood which left the whole face visible. You could see the forehead, broad and low, and lined with puzzled thinking; the dusky, tumbled hair; the wishful, pathetic mouth with its drooping corners; and the great, strange, olive-colored eyes, which looked

as if they had asked for something they could never find for such a weary while that now they would never ask again, — eyes dark with despair, and yet with a suggestion of something else in them which set you questioning.

Patiently she swept on. Sometimes she had to spring aside from the rapid passage of cart or carriage, sometimes she made clean the way of some dainty foot passenger, who rewarded her with a penny ; but all the time the hopeless, unchildlike visage never betrayed the slightest gleam of interest. I was dabbling in art a little, just then ; and I stood in the window of a picture store and watched her, thinking that her strange, impassive face ought to fit, somewhere, in the illustrations I was making for a book of ballads, but not knowing quite how to use it.

All at once, as I watched, I saw a singular change pass over her. She held her broom motionless, her lips parted, a light as if at midnight the sun should rise, lighted the darkness of her eyes, her whole expression kindled with something, — interest, surprise, expectation, — I hardly

knew what, but something that transformed it as by a spell. I stepped to the door then, and followed her eyes up the street.

It takes ten times as long to tell this as it was in happening. It all came in an instant,—the change in her face, my going out to look for its cause, and the sight which, following her eyes, I saw,—a carriage coming swiftly down street, an elegant open barouche, in which sat a lady dressed in furs and velvet, and a wonderfully beautiful, golden-haired child. It was at the child that my little crossing-sweeper was looking, with a gaze which seemed to me to say,—

“So this, then, is childhood? *This* is what we ought to be when we are young; and how beautiful it is!”

She looked so intently that she forgot she was standing in the way, until the coachman shouted out to her, while he tried with all his strength to pull up his horses. She had looked one moment too long. Somehow the pole knocked her down, and the horses stepped over or on her, which I could not see; but in another moment

they were drawn up a rod farther on, the lady was getting out of her carriage, and I myself was in the heart of the crowd which gathered at once, as usual. "Her arm is broken," one cried. "She has fainted," said another.

"Where is her home; can any one tell?" asked the lady in the furs and the velvet, standing now beside her.

A ragged little newsboy stepped from the ranks and pulled at some ghost of a cap. "Please, ma'am, I know," he said. "It's down here in Moonstone Court, with old Sally."

"Hey for Sally, in our alley," sang another little limb of evil, vexed that he had not been the one who knew the local habitation afore-said.

Newsboy No. 1 was elevated to the coachman's box, and was desired to show the way. The lady got into the carriage herself, and received the injured and swooning girl, whom there were strong arms enough to lift,—the golden-haired child looked on with the compassion of an angel in her angelic face,—newsboy No. 2 hung on

behind dexterously, making sure that his offence would pass unnoticed in the general *mêlée*, and the carriage rolled away toward Moonstone Court. Presently the golden-haired child spoke.

"What if they haven't any good place for her there, mamma?"

Mrs. Brierly, for that was the lady's name, bent forward and addressed newsboy No. 1, on the box.

"Is the old Sally you spoke of the girl's mother?"

"No, ma'am. She ain't no relation to her. I've heard folks say, Ruthy's father and mother died, and old Sally took her in to beg for her; to be a sufferin' orphin, you know; and lately Ruthy won't beg any more, and they say the old un do beat her awful."

"O mamma!" It was all the pitiful, childish lips said; but the blue eyes full of tears finished the prayer.

"Don't be afraid, Gracie," the lady answered, smiling; "she shall not go there." Then she turned to newsboy No. 1. "Here is some money

for you. You can tell old Sally that the girl got hurt, and has been taken to the hospital. You had better go and let her know at once."

So newsboy No. 1 got down from his unwonted elevation, pulled again at the phantom of a cap, and, looking curiously at the fresh, crisp currency in his hand, walked away. Newsboy No. 2, correctly divining that nothing was to be gained by remaining, while, by following his comrade he might perhaps come in for a treat, let go his hold on the carriage, and went after the other.

"Now, James," Mrs. Brierly said to the coachman, "you may drive to the Children's Hospital, on Rutland Street."

"We shall go right by home, shan't we, mamma?"

"Yes, dear."

"I suppose we couldn't be a hospital, could we?"

"Not very conveniently, I think. It is better to help keep up a hospital outside than to turn our own house into one."

"Yes'm," Gracie said, thoughtfully, "only this once, when we did the hurting, I didn't know but it would be nice if we did the curing."

Just then, before Mrs. Brierly answered, the swooning girl revived, and opened for an instant her curious, olive-colored eyes. There was something in their look, perhaps, which went farther than Gracie's argument. At any rate, the lady said, —

"After all, James, you may as well leave us at home, and go at once for Dr. Cheever."

In five minutes more the carriage had stopped before a substantial, prosperous-looking house, the coachman had carried the poor, suffering little waif upstairs in his arms, and Mrs. Brierly had summoned Mrs. Morris, the good, motherly woman who had been Gracie's nurse, to her councils.

When Dr. Cheever came, he found his patient in clean, pure clothes, in a fresh, lovely room, waiting for him with a piteous, silent patience which it was pathetic to see. She suffered cruelly from her hurt, a compound fracture of

the wrist, but she was not used to making moans or receiving sympathy ; and it would have seemed to her a sort of sacrilege to cry out with human pain in this paradise to which she had been brought. One could only guess at her suffering by her compressed lips, with the white pallor round them, and the dark rings about her eyes.

Dr. Cheever listened to the account of the accident, while he dressed the poor hurt wrist with a gentleness which soothed the pain his touch caused. When he had done all he could, he followed Mrs. Brierly from the room.

"This will be an affair of several weeks," he said. "Would it not have been better to take the girl to one of the hospitals?"

"I thought so, at first; but, as Gracie said, we did the hurting, and it seemed right we should do the healing. Besides, the child's face interested me strangely, and I think it will not be a bad thing for us to have a little experience of this sort."

Meantime Ruthy lay and looked about her, as

we have all fancied ourselves looking when, the death sleep over, we shall open our eyes to a new morning in some one of the Father's "many mansions." To a denizen of Moonstone Court this peaceful spot in which Ruthy found herself might well seem no unworthy heaven. The walls were tinted a soft, delicate gray, with blue borderings. On the drab carpet blue forget-me-nots blossomed. Blue ribbons tied back the white muslin curtains, and all the little china articles for use or ornament were blue and gilt.

Only one picture was in the room, and that hung over the mantel, directly opposite the pure white bed where Ruthy lay. It was a landscape by Gifford, — one of those glorified pictures of his which paint nature as only a poet sees her. Soft meadows sloped away into dreamy distance on one side, and, on the other, into the green enchantment of a wood a winding path beguiled you. In the centre, with her raised foot upon a stile by which she was about to cross into the peaceful meadows, a young girl stood with morn-

ing in her eyes. Just as she raised her foot she had paused and turned her head to look over her shoulder, as if she heard a voice calling her, and was hesitating whether to go on her appointed way or back into the green wood's enchantment. There was a wonderful suggestion for a story in the girl's face, her attitude, her questioning eyes. But if Ruthy felt this at all, it was very vaguely and unconsciously; yet the picture revealed to her a new world. Somewhere, then, meadows bloomed like these meadows, and woods were green, and light flickered through tender leaves, and over all the great, glorious blue sky arched and smiled. Somewhere! That must be country,—outside of the pavements and the tall, frowning houses. Oh, if she *could* go! Oh, but she *would* go! Let her wrist but get well, and then! She had never had these dreams before. The vision of the country, the true country, had never dawned on her till now. And yet she must have seen pictures of it in the windows of print shops; but her eyes had not been anointed, or Gifford had not painted the pictures.

All through the quiet weeks in which her sore hurt was healing, she watched that painted landscape, and her longing to find it grew and grew. But she never said a word about it. Indeed, she seldom spoke at all except to answer some question.

Mrs. Brierly became strangely interested in her in spite of this silence, which piqued and disappointed Gracie. The child could not understand what the mother guessed at,—the sense of isolation which tormented Ruthy. She was among them, but not of them, the girl felt. She had been injured by an accident for which these people in some wise held themselves responsible, and so they were good to her, and gave her this glimpse of heaven. But they were of the chosen people, and she a Gentile, an outcast at their gates. If she could but go away from every thing she had ever known, and follow that winding path into the still wood, she should be happy. Who knew what she might not find there,—love, may be, and friends, and home,—perhaps, even, the father and mother who, as old Sally said, were dead? Who knew?

One day Mrs. Brierly came in to sit with her. Ruthy could sit up now, and she was in a low rocking-chair, still facing the picture. The lady saw the direction of her eyes, and said, gently, —

“I think you must like pictures very much, Ruthy?”

The olive-colored eyes gleamed, and a flickering flush came and went in the thin cheeks, but the girl answered shyly and guardedly, as her wont was.

“I don’t know, ma’am ; I have never seen any. I like this one. It is the country ; isn’t it ?”

Mrs. Brierly smiled.

“Yes ; it is the country as Gifford, the man who made the picture, saw it. Country means ploughed fields and potatoes to some people, and paradise to others. I think *you* could find Gifford’s country, Ruthy.”

The girl’s heart gave a great, sudden bound. That was just what she meant to do ; but she was silent. Soon Mrs. Brierly asked, —

“Do you remember your father and mother, Ruthy ? I think they must have been very different people from old Sally.”

"Yes, ma'am, I remember my mother. Father died so long ago I have forgotten all about him, and mother and I grew poorer and poorer, until one day I woke up, as it seemed, from a long dream, with my hair all gone, and very weak; and the neighbors said mother and I had both had a fever, and she was dead. Then Sally took me and sent me out to beg, until I wouldn't beg any more; and since then I've sold matches and swept crossings, and done any thing else I could. My wrist is getting so I can use it now, and I must go to work again. I am very thankful to you, ma'am. I would have my wrist broke twenty times to come once into this house and lie in this white bed, and see that picture. But to-morrow I shall be well enough to put on my own clothes again and go to work, and I will, please, ma'am."

"These are your own clothes that you have on, Ruthy, your very own. And here are more changes for you in this drawer, and here in the closet are your shawl and hat. You must not go away yet, till you are much stronger; but when you do go, all these things are your own."

"My very own!" It was a sort of glad cry which came from the girl's quivering lips. Her eyes filled, and the flickering color came into her cheeks. Mrs. Brierly got up and went away. She had never heard Ruthy speak so many words before, and she began to feel that she should get to the girl's heart in time, but she would not let her excite herself any more, now. And Ruthy sat and looked at the picture, and thought.

The next morning rose bright and clear, — a summer morning, which had slipped away from its kindred and stolen on in advance to brighten the last week in April. Nurse Morris went first into Ruthy's room, and found the little white bed empty, and the room empty also. She called the maid who had been sweeping down the steps and washing the sidewalk, and asked if she had seen any one go out. No one, the girl said, but she had left the door unfastened while she just chatted a bit with Katy, next door, and some one might have gone, and she not know it.

Mrs. Morris went next to Mrs. Brierly with her

tale, and Mrs. Brierly came in dressing-gown and slippers to look at the empty room. The hat and shawl she had put in the closet for Ruthy were gone, but the changes of clothes in the drawer were untouched; and upon them lay a piece of paper on which the girl had printed laboriously, in great capital letters, —

“ I AM GOING TO FIND THE COUNTRY. I DID NOT TELL, FOR FEAR I WOULD NOT BE LET TO GO. GOD BLESS YOU, MA’AM, I’M VERY THANKFUL.”

It seemed useless to try to follow her on her unknown road. No one could guess in what direction she had gone. Tender-hearted little Gracie cried over her departure; Mrs. Brierly felt very anxious and uneasy, but they could only wait. And it was three days before any news came. It was brought, at last, by an odd messenger. A market-man stopped with his wagon before the house, and, ringing the bell, asked to see the mistress, and was shown upstairs.

“ Did a young girl, sort of delicate lookin’, leave you lately, ma’am?”

“ Yes, on Tuesday morning. Can you tell me any thing of her ? ”

“ Well, you see, I get up nigh about in the middle of the night to get things ready for market, and Wednesday morning I found a girl lying in a dead faint on my barn floor. I called my wife, and we brought her to, and wife asked her where she came from. ‘ Mrs. Brierly’s, No. 775 Tremont Street,’ she answered, straight enough ; and then she went off again, and the next time we brought her to there was no more sense to be got out of her. She just kept saying over something about finding the country, and ‘ it ain’t there.’ ”

“ I had to come off to market, but we carried her into the house, and in the middle of the forenoon wife see the doctor goin’ by, and she jest called to him. He said it was brain fever ; and she don’t get any better ; and wife said I’d better stop at 775, and if there was a Mrs. Brierly here, why, I could let her know. We live at Highville, about fifteen miles from Boston ; and if you ask for Job Smith’s you’ll find my house.”

So poor little Ruthy had walked all those lone-

some miles to find the country that Gifford saw, and had found, instead, pain and weariness, and who knew what more?

That day Mrs. Brierly drove out there, and took Nurse Morris with her; Ruthy recognized neither of them, and at length Mrs. Brierly drove sadly away, leaving Nurse Morris behind to care for the sick child, as busy Mrs. Job Smith, with all her kindness, was unable to do.

And after a while the fever wore itself out, and Ruthy, a white wraith of a girl, was carried back into the chamber of peace, where the country Gifford saw was hanging on the wall. But the days went by, and the spring came slowly up that way, and the young summer followed, and Ruthy was still a pale, white wraith, and grew no rosier and no stronger.

"Do get well, Ruthy," loving little Gracie used to say, "and we'll take you to find the country."

But Ruthy would shake her head with a slow, mournful motion, and answer, —

"No use, Miss Gracie, it is in the picture, but it ain't anywhere else."

And by and by they began to know that Ruthy would never go where pleasant paths led through the wood's green enchantment, or peaceful meadows smiled in the summer sunshine. Sorrow and privation and weariness had done their work too well, and the little heart, that beat so much too fast now, would stop beating soon. But Ruthy was very happy. The unrest that had possessed her before she went to find the country was all over. She had tried her experiment, and found out, as she thought, that the true country was not to be reached by earthly winding ways, and she was content to watch it as Gifford painted it, and dream her silent dreams, which no one knew, as she watched.

One night when Gracie bade her good-night and danced away, she looked after her with the old, wistful wonder in her eyes, and then looked up at Mrs. Brierly.

"How beautiful God can make children, ma'am. I think they'll *all* be so, in the true country." Then reaching forward she took Mrs. Brierly's hand and touched it for the first time with her humble, grateful lips.

“Oh, ma'am,” she said, “you are so dear and good.”

The next morning, when they found her lying still, she was whiter than ever. She would never speak again to tell her disappointment or her joy, but a wonderful smile, a smile of triumph, was frozen on her young, wistful mouth, and Mrs. Brierly, looking at her, stooped to kiss Gracie's tears away, and said,—

“Do not cry, my darling,—I think, at last, Ruthy has found the true country.”

JOB GOLDING'S CHRISTMAS.

IT was very strange, thought old Job Golding, that he couldn't be master of his own mind. He had lived a great many years, and neither remorse nor memory had ever been in the habit of disturbing him ; but now it seemed to him as if the very foundations of his life were breaking up. He was through with his day's work, — he had dined comfortably, — he sat in an easy-chair, in a luxurious room whose crimson hangings shut out the still cold of the December afternoon, — for the 24th of December it was. He was all ready to enjoy himself. How singular that this state of things should remind him of a coming time when his life work would be all done, — even as his day's work was all done now, — when he would be ready to sit down in the afternoon and look over the balance sheet of his deeds. How curiously the old days came trooping in slow procession before him.

His dead wife ; he had not loved her much when she was with him, but how vivid was his memory of her now ! He could see her moving round the house, noiseless as a shadow, never intruding on him, after he had once or twice answered her gruffly, but going on her own meek, still ways, with her face growing whiter every day. He began to understand, as he looked back, why her strength had failed and she had been ready, when her baby came, to float out on the tide and let it drift her into God's haven. She had had enough to eat and to drink, but he saw now that he had left her heart to starve. He seemed to see her white, still face, as he looked at it the last time before they screwed down the coffin lid, with the dumb reproach frozen on it, the eyes, that would never again plead vainly, closed for ever.

He recalled how passionately the three-days-old baby cried in another room, just at that moment, moving all the people gathered at the funeral with a thrill of pity for the poor little motherless morsel. She *was* a passionate, wilful baby, all through her babyhood, he remembered. She wanted—

missed without knowing what the lack was — the love which her mother would have given her, and protested against fate with all the might of her lungs. But, as soon as she grew old enough to understand how useless it was, *she* had grown quiet, too ; just like her mother. He recalled her, all through her girlhood, a shy, still girl, always obedient and submissive, but never drawing very near him. Did she have tastes, he wondered — wants, longings ? She never told him.

But suddenly, when she was eighteen, the old, passionate spirit that had made her cry so when she was a baby must have awakened again, he thought ; for she fell in love then, and married in defiance of his wishes. He remembered her standing proudly before him, and asking, —

“ Father, do you know any thing against Harry Church ? ”

“ Yes,” he had answered wrathfully ; “ I know that he is as poor as Job was when he sat among the ashes ; he can’t keep a wife.”

“ Any thing else, father ? ” looking him steadily in the eye.

"No, that's enough," he had thundered ; "and I'll tell you, besides, that if you marry him you must lie in the bed you will make. My doors will never open to you again, never."

He met with a will as strong as his own that time. She *did* marry Harry Church, and went away with him from her father's house. She had written home more than once afterwards, but he had sent the letters all back unopened. He wished, to-day, that he knew what had been in them ; whether she had been suffering for any thing. He wondered why he had opposed the marriage so much. Harry Church had been a clerk in his store ; faithful, intelligent, industrious, only — poor. In that word lay the head and front of his offending. He, Job Golding, was rich, — had been rich all his lifetime, — but what special thing had riches done for him ? He was an old man now, and all alone. "All alone ;" he kept saying that over and over, with a sort of vague self-pity.

And all this time a message was on its way to him.

He heard a ring at the door, but he went on

with his thoughts, and did not trouble himself about it. Meantime, two persons had been admitted into the hall below ; a man and a little girl, eight years old, perhaps. Her companion took off her hood and her warm wrappings, and the child stood there, — a dainty, delicate creature, — her golden curls drooping softly round her face, with its large blue eyes and parted scarlet lips. The housekeeper had come into the hall, and she turned pale as she saw that little face.

“Miss Amy’s child,” she said to the man, nervously. “It is as much as my place is worth to let her come in here.”

“You are Mrs. Osgood, are you not?” said the little girl, looking at her.

“Hear the blessed lamb! Who in this world told you there *was* a Mrs. Osgood?”

“Mamma. You loved mamma, didn’t you? She said you were always so kind to her.”

“Loved your ma? Well, I *did* love her. The old house has never been the same since she went out of it.”

“Then you’ll let me go up alone and see

grandpa? That is what mamma said I was to do."

Mrs. Osgood hesitated a moment, then love and memory triumphed over fear, and she said, —

"Yes, you shall. Heaven forbid I should hinder you! Go right upstairs and open the first door."


The man who had come with her sat down in the hall to wait, and the little figure, with its gleaming, golden hair, tripped on alone.

She opened the door softly, and went in. She did not speak; perhaps the stern-looking old man sitting there awed her to silence. She just stepped up to him and handed him a letter. He took it, scarcely noticing, so busy was he with his thoughts, at the hand of what strange messenger. He looked at the outside. It was his daughter's writing. Ten years ago he had sent her last letter back unopened; but this one, — what influence apart from himself moved him to read it? It was not long, but it commenced with "Dear father." He had never been a dear father to her, he thought.

She had waited all these silent years, she told him, because she was determined never to write to him again until they were rich enough for him to know that she did not write from any need of his help. They had passed these ten years in the West, and Heaven had prospered them. Her husband was a rich man, now; and she wanted from her father only his love, — wanted only that death should not come between them, and either of them go to her mother's side without having been reconciled to the other.

“Let *her* lips speak to you from the grave,” she wrote; “her lips, which you must have loved once, and which never grew old or lost their youth's brightness, — let them plead with you to be reconciled to her child. Surely, you will not turn away from the messenger I send, — your own grandchild.”

The messenger, — he had forgotten about her. He turned and she was standing there, like a spirit, on his hearthstone, with her white face and her gleaming golden hair. He looked at her, and saw her father's broad, full brow and thought-



ful eyes, and below them the sweetness of her mother's smile. His grandchild — his! His heart throbbed chokingly. He grew hungry to clasp her, — to feel her soft arms clinging round his neck, her tender lips kissing away the furrows of his hard life from his face. But he feared to startle her. He tried to speak gently, — he, to whom gentleness was so new and strange.

"Come here, little girl," he said; and she went up to him fearlessly. "Can you tell me how old you are, and what your name is?"

"I am eight, grandpapa, and my name is Amy."

Another Amy! He felt the great sobs rising up from his heart, but he choked them back.

"What have they told you about me?" he asked her anxiously. Could it be possible, he wondered, that they had not taught her to hate him?

"They always told me that you were far away toward where the sun rose; and if I were good they would fetch me to see you some day. And every night I say in my prayers, 'God bless papa and mamma, and God bless grandpapa.'"

“Why *didn't* they fetch you; what made them let you come alone?”

“Mamma said she would surprise you with your big grandchild. They are waiting at the hotel, and John is down-stairs. They want you to come back with me. Will you, grandpapa?”

Mrs. Osgood looked on in wonder, as her master came downstairs and put on his overcoat, — came down holding the child's hand in his, her golden hair floating beside him. Was that old Job Golding?

He stepped into the carriage in which careful Mistress Amy had sent her messenger. The horses did not go fast enough. He would have been in a fever of impatience, but the child's hand in his quieted him. Through it all he was wondering vaguely what it meant, — whether he were his own old self, or some one else.

At last they were there, and the child led him in, — up the long hotel stairs, across hall and corridor, — until, at length, she opened a door and said cheerily, —

“Mamma, here's grandpapa.”

His head swam. He was fain to sit down, and there were his own Amy's arms about his neck. Why had he never known what he lost, in losing the sweetness of her love, through all these vanished years? He held her fast now, and he heard her voice close to his ear: —

“Father, are we reconciled at last?”

“I don't know, daughter, until you've told me whether you've forgiven me.”

“There need be no talk about forgiveness,” she said. “You went according to your own light. It is enough that God has brought us together again in peace. I thought that no one could resist my little Amy, least of all her grand-papa.”

He looked up, and the child stood by, silently; the firelight glittering in her golden hair, her face shining strangely sweet. He put out his arms and drew her into them, close — where no child, not even his own, had ever nestled before. Oh, how much he had missed in life! he thought. He felt her clinging hold round his neck, — her kisses dropped upon his face like the pitying dew from

heaven, and he — *was* it himself, or another soul in his place?

“Here, father,” Amy’s voice had a cheerful ring to it, and her happy married life had made of her a fine, contented, matronly-appearing woman, “here are Harry and the boys waiting to speak to you.”

He shook his son-in-law’s hand heartily. Old feuds, old things, were over now, and all was become new. Then he looked at the boys, — six-years-old Hal, three-years-old Geordie, — brave, merry little fellows, of whom he should be proud some day; only they could never be to him quite like this girl in his arms, — his first-found grandchild.

He sat there among them, surrounded by the peace and warmth of their household love, and felt as if a new life had come. He did not go away until long after, by the rules of any well-ordered nursery, those three pairs of bright little eyes should have been closed in sleep; but they must sit up to see the last of grandpapa. When, at length, he went, he told them that they must

all come home to him on the morrow, — there must be no more staying at hotels, when his big, lonesome house was waiting for them.

“To-morrow is Christmas,” his daughter said, half doubtfully.

“All the better. If Christmas was never kept in my house, it ought to be. Come round to dinner, — three o’clock sharp, — and bring all the boxes with you. That will give you time to pack up, and Mrs. Osgood time to get your rooms ready.”

“Boxes and boys, — won’t they be too much for you, father?”

“When they are I’ll tell you,” — with a last touch of the old gruffness.

Then he went out on the street, and began looking for Christmas gifts. It was new business for him, but he went into it earnestly and anxiously. It was so late, and every one seemed so busy, he thought it would never do to trust to the shopmen for sending things home. So he perambulated the streets like a bewildered Santa Claus, — and went home, at last, laden with books and toys and

jewels and bon-bons,—with a doll that could walk, and a parrot that could talk, and no end of sweets and confections.

He called Mrs. Osgood to help him put them away, and when they were all disposed of he said, with a curious attempt at maintaining his old sternness and dignity, which caused the good woman a secret smile,—

“Mrs. Osgood, I hope you will do yourself and me credit to-morrow. My daughter, Mrs. Church, is coming home with her husband and children, and I want the best Christmas dinner you can get up, to be on the table at a quarter-past three.”

Mrs. Osgood had always loved Miss Amy, in the old days, and had been hoping against hope, all these years, for the reconciliation which had come now. So her heart was in her task, and the dinner was a master-piece,—a real work of genius, as she used to say, when she told the story afterwards.

Amy, and Amy's husband, and the roystering boys, and, best of all, the little girl close at grand-papa's side, with her happy eyes shining, and her

golden hair gleaming, and her quiet, womanly little ways,— what a jubilant party they were! And among them all Job Golding saw, or fancied that he saw, another face, over which, almost thirty years ago, he had seen the grave-sod piled, — a face sad and wistful no longer, but bright with a strange glory. No one else saw *her*, he knew, for the gay laughs were going round, but close at his side she seemed to stand; and he heard, or fancied that he heard, a whisper from her parted lips, which only his ear caught, — the Christmas anthem, —

“Peace on earth and good will toward men.”

MY COMFORTER.

I GOT up and hung a shawl over the canary's cage to keep him quiet. He had been singing all day, till it seemed to me I could not bear it any longer. That morning the doctor had told me that my mother would never be any better. She was liable, he said, to die at any time. At the longest, it was only a question of days or weeks. And my mother was all I had in the world.

My father had been dead a year. In his lifetime we had lived in a pleasant country home. He had been employed in the county bank, and we had lived most comfortably, and even with some pretensions to elegance. I had been sent to school, and learned a little French, a little music, and something of art. I had, too, a great deal of skill in fancy work, and had been used to find in that and

my painting my amusements. Indeed, we all had what are called elegant tastes, — tastes which suited a much larger income than ours, and we indulged them. This was unwise, perhaps. People said so, at any rate, when my father died suddenly, and left us with no property and no dependence save our home.

It was to escape alike their censure and their pity, as much as because I fancied I could find more openings for employment, that I persuaded mother to join me in selling our little place, and remove to New York. She was willing enough to do this. I think that it was a relief to her to go away from all the familiar sights and sounds which kept so constantly before her the memory of the dead husband who had made her life among them so blessed. She fancied, perhaps, that when she was among unfamiliar things the first bitterness of her grief would wear away. But with her, as it proved, change of place was only change of pain. She was not made of the stuff to which forgetfulness is possible.

Our home and furniture brought us a little over

three thousand dollars, and with this sum we went to New York. In spite of my mourning for my father I had the elasticity of youth, and I did not make this removal, enter into this wide, strange, new life, without my share of the high hopes and brilliant anticipations of youth.

We went first to a hotel, and then looked up a boarding-place in a quiet, unpretentious street, suited to our means. We expected to use two or three hundred dollars before we got well established; and then I hoped to earn enough to keep us, with the help of the interest of the three thousand we should still have remaining, without encroaching upon the principal. I might have succeeded, perhaps, — for I was not long in procuring fancy work from two fashionable trimming stores, — if, when we had been there a little while, my mother's health had not begun seriously to decline. I think she made an effort to live on, after all the joy of her life was dead, for my sake; but she failed, and by and by she grew weary and gave up the struggle.

Of course her illness brought upon us new ex-

penses. I would have for her the best medical advice, however she might protest against it as useless; and there were various little comforts and luxuries that I could not and would not deny myself the pleasure of procuring for her. So we were gradually going behindhand all the time. This had troubled me a little; but now that the doctor had spoken my mother's doom, the matter of dollars and cents faded into utter insignificance. There would be more than enough to take care of her to the last, and after that I could not bring myself to think. I would have shuddered at the thought of self-destruction, but I believe the prayer was in my mind, every moment in the day, that God would let me care for her till the end, and then lie down and die beside her. So I carried back the work I had from Richmond's and La Pierre's, and spent all my time with her,—my darling.

Often when I tried to talk with her, the thought how soon she would be past all hearing would rise up and choke me, and I would turn away to hide the sudden rush of tears. It was on Wednesday

the doctor had told me what I must expect; and up to Saturday night I had kept it from her, trying my poor best to wear a cheerful face. That night I sat beside her in the twilight. She was on the lounge, bolstered up with pillows, and I on a low hassock, which brought my face on a level with hers. We had been silent a long time, since the last ray of sunset touched our western windows, and now the dusk had fallen so that we could see each other no longer. At last out of the shadows came her voice, clear and sweet, —

“Beyond the sowing and the reaping,
Beyond the watching and the weeping,
Beyond the waking and the sleeping,
I shall be soon.”

Then she put out her hand and touched my wet face.

“Do not grieve, my darling,” she said, — oh, how tenderly, — “because I am going home. The only pang I feel is for you, and it will not be long before you come.”

“It may be years,” I said, bitterly. “I am young and strong. Oh, I wish I wasn’t, — if God

would only take me too, and not make me stay in this great, empty world without you ! ”

“ I think, darling, He will send you a comforter.”

“ Oh, I am not so bad that I do not want His Spirit. I do believe ; I do try to follow the dear Lord ; but I want a human comforter, — something to see and feel, — tender lips, gentle fingers. The flesh is so weak.”

“ And I meant a human comforter. I believe He will send you one in His own time and way, — when you learn, perhaps, to forget yourself in helping some one still more desolate.”

“ As if that could be. O, mother, when you are gone there won’t be in the whole wide world such a lonesome, aching heart as mine.”

“ People always say that, dear ; always think there is no sorrow like their sorrow, until God teaches them better, either by making their own burden heavier, or by showing them how to help some one else. God grant it may be this last with you, Bessie.”

“ But is there no hope, mother ? ” I said, with

a wild longing for a little of the comfort a doubt would give.

"I think none. Dr. West told you so Wednesday, did he not? and you have been trying to keep it from me, — as if I could not read it in your face, every time you looked at me."

All reserve broke down then. I was in her arms, sobbing and crying on her bosom; I that so soon would have no mother's bosom for my refuge any more for ever.

The doctor had said her life was a question of days or weeks. She lived four weeks after he told me that, and then one night she talked with me a long, long time. At last she said she was tired, and would go to sleep. Then she kissed me, as she always did, and turned her gentle face toward the wall. She awoke again in another world than ours. But by the calm blessedness of the smile on the dead face I knew that her soul had departed in peace. It was a smile that made her young and fair again, as the mother I remembered away back in my childhood.

Oh, what a desolate funeral that was! I had no

friends near enough to give them any claim to be sent for, and I wanted no one. I made all the arrangements myself, and the third day I buried my dead. I remember the minister, after the funeral rites were over, stopped a moment beside the grave to speak a few words of sympathy to me, sole mourner. But I was deaf with sorrow. I made no answer, and presently he turned away. I don't know how long I stood there. After a while my driver came up, touching his hat, respectfully, and asked, —

“Would ye please to start soon, miss?” and mechanically I went toward the carriage, and he put me in and shut the door. So I went back to the desolate room where she had died.

Some one had been in during my absence and made it all bright and tidy, but I would rather have found it dark, and gloomy, and comfortless, as when I went away. The days which followed were sad and evil. My soul rose in revolt. I asked why I, of all others, should be so set apart by sorrow, — left so lonely and so desolate. For a whole week I had been thus mutinous. I had

seen in my God no Father, but an Avenger. All the promises of love and joy were sealed from me. I passed through the very valley and shadow of death, and in its darkness the powers of evil did battle for my soul ; until at last I slept, one night, and dreamed of mother, for the first time since she died. In the dream she seemed beside me, but not as of old. A spiritual beauty sat upon her face, a blessedness such as mortals never know looked from her eyes, but her voice came, low and sweet, as it used : " I think, darling, the Father will send you a comforter."

I woke refreshed, as I had not been before by any slumber. The voice of my dream lingered with me, and calmed me, as my mother's words used to. I began to have faith. I remembered *how* she had thought my comforter was to come. But when and where should I find some one more desolate than myself to help ? At any rate, not by sitting still to nurse my woe, an idler in the vineyard. I must go to work.

I put on my deep mourning bonnet and went out. If I could get my old work from the trim-

ming stores, I could earn enough now to take care of myself, and keep what money I had left as surety against the proverbial rainy day. I made my way first to Richmond's. As I went in I noticed a little lame girl with her crutch sitting beside the door. One sees such objects of charity often enough in New York. I doubt if this one would have attracted me but for her singular beauty. She had the fairest skin I ever saw, with large, dark eyes, and hair of a pure auburn tint. It was a face full of contrasts, and yet of the most exquisite loveliness. I noticed she attracted others as well as myself, for while I stood a few moments looking at her, no one went into the store who did not drop a few pennies in the little outstretched hand. I followed the universal example as I went in, and at my gift, as at every other, a deep blush crimsoned the sensitive little face.

I made my arrangements to resume my old employments, and then went out, and down the street to La Pierre's. When I came back, half an hour later, the child was still sitting there ; and I looked at her again, wondering anew at her delicate

beauty. Then a thrill of compassion warmed my heart for the poor little waif. It was a cold day in the autumn, and she was very thinly clad ; sitting, poor little morsel, upon the cold stone, too lame, it seemed, to move about and warm herself, even if she wished ; evidently, too, ashamed and miserable over her occupation. I went up to her and spoke to her.

“What is your name ?”

“Jennie Green.”

“Whose little girl are you ?”

“Nobody’s, ma’am.”

Oh, perhaps I should not have understood the wail of sadness in those words if I, too, had not been nobody’s girl.

“Have you no friends ?” I asked, putting my question in a new form.

“No, ma’am. Mother died last spring, and I’ve had no friends since.”

“But you live somewhere ?”

“Oh, yes ; there was a woman in the next room to mother, and she took me when mother died, and every day she sends me out like this, and she takes the money I get to pay for my keeping.”

"Do you like to live with her?" I pursued, getting strangely interested.

A quick shudder of repugnance answered me before her words, —

"Oh, no, no!"

A sudden impulse moved me. I beckoned to a policeman who stood near by watching us.

"Do you know any thing of this child?" I inquired.

"Not much. She seems a quiet, well-disposed young one. A woman brings her here, a pretty rough customer, and leaves her here, and comes back after her toward night. I've seen her use her pretty hard, sometimes."

"That woman is no relation to her," I said, "only a person in the house, that kept her when her mother died, — to make money out of her, I suppose. Would it be against any law if I took her home with me, without letting any one know where she was gone, and took care of her? Could that woman claim her again?"

The policeman whistled, by which token proving himself Yankee born, and considered a moment. Then he answered, deliberately, —

"No, it ain't agin no law, as I knows of. I don't think the woman would dare to take her from you. and 'tain't likely any one would disturb you. All I'm thinking on is, — you're young, miss, — would your folks like it, and wouldn't you get tired on her?"

"I have no folks," I said, with the old sadness rising up and choking me. "Will you kindly call a carriage, and put her in?"

I had given my direction without at all consulting the child. When he was gone for the hack I went up to her and asked her if she would go home with me, and have it for her home.

"Do you mean me to leave Mrs. McGuire?" she cried, with wide eyes.

"Yes, if you want to."

"And not — not come out for money any more?"

"Not, please God, while I have strength to work for us both."

"Oh, I do want to go, I do!" she cried, wild with eagerness. And then she drew her little crutch toward her, and painfully raised herself and stood there waiting.

“ Oh, can't we go now ? ” she asked, in an eager whisper. “ It's almost time for Mrs. McGuire.”

Just then the carriage came up to the sidewalk, and I carried my poor little foundling home.

Yesterday was the anniversary of my dear mother's death, and I lived over again the old sorrow, tasted its bitterness anew. I laid my head on the pillow where she died, and sobbed out the passion of desolation which swept over me. And as I lay there crying I heard gentle footsteps, and then felt soft lips on my cheek, and heard a voice, —

“ Oh, can't I comfort you, Miss Bessie ? Can't I do any thing for you, now you've made my life all new and bright ? ”

And I opened my arms, and took into them my little dark-eyed, bright-haired girl, and realized that God indeed had sent me my comforter, — a comforter found, as my mother had predicted, when I forgot myself in trying to comfort one yet more desolate.

I should never have dared to act upon the impulse which led me to bring the child home, had I been less utterly alone in the world. But I have never regretted it. I found that her parents had brought her up in the fear of God, and all the rude and rough associations, which had worked their worst on her after her mother's death, had never soiled her innate purity. My care and tenderness have made of her all I hoped. Dr. West's skill has almost cured her lameness, and she walks without a crutch now, and with only the slightest suggestion of a limp. She helps me at my tasks, and for her sake I have recalled my old pencil craft, and here I foresee that the pupil is soon to surpass her teacher ; and some day I fancy you may see on the walls of the academy a picture by a girl artist with brown eyes and auburn hair, — the child who was my comforter.

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